Government policies widen wealth gap but don’t cure slump

Inequality crisis

● Handouts to banks ● Social cuts ● Wages pushed down – see page 5
What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped so that the capitalist classes, driven to increase their wealth, Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, inequality, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalist classes, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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

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

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.

- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.

- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.

- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the working class.

- Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework.

- Free abortion on request.

- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

- Black and Asian workers' unity against racism.

- Open borders.

- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere can and must learn from each other with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.

- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace to community to global social organisation.

- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.

- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

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NEWS

The fight for secularism

Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association, spoke to Ira Berkow in the Daily Telegraph.

What's behind the resurgence in self-confidence on the part of organised religion?

In many ways the apparent resurgence is only apparent and not as real as it seems. The situation is that of a diminishing group of individuals who are louder rather than, a growing group speaking up with increasing confidence.

However, it is certainly true that in other easier identifiable and self-promoting groups, politicians are increasingly turning to ready-made religious groups whose leaders, even though they are often self-appointed, can present themselves as speaking for a large group. This is a failure of politics.

In the context of the growth of the far-right, and its "anti-Islam" or "anti-Muslim" edge, how can anti-racist secularists create a political space that allows for secularist, atheist and humanist critique of Islam (and all religions) while rejecting the anti-Muslim racism?

It is important to point out that many religious people are secularists — that is, they believe that the shared political life of a diverse community needs to be governed in a way that does not disadvantage or privilege people on grounds of their religion or belief.

Religious people benefit from that as it is what gives them the freedom to believe, worship and dissent as they wish — a freedom that does not exist in non-sectarian states.

Atheist critiques of theocratic religions focus — as well on the question of truth — on the negative social, cultural and political effects of religious ideas. We think this is helpful in distinguishing humanist critiques of religious belief, religious organisations and their effects onvidious stances that use criticism of religion as an avatar for racism.

How much of a problem is "official" or establishment multiculturalism? E.g. the doctrine of boxing off ethnic-cultural groups into rigid categories each presided over by some self-appointed "community leader" who will invariably represent a less-than-progressive in-stitution or organisation?

How can we develop a critique of that which defends the idea of a multi-cultural society but criticises this establishment multiculturalism? It's a major problem. In creating the Government is offering strong encouragement to religious groups to play a role in local communities and to help government to welcome such religious groups as "partners".

Do we need to take a critical approach to these arrangements and understand that more than would be offered to one group with strong links with the local community they might be acceptable.

Religious groups and communities have been singled out by Government as having a special importance and being in need of special attention and assistance, mostly in isolation from other communities and almost always to the exclusion of the non-religious. This is harmful for people.

Firstly because it wastes the opportunity of shared cohesive and other community initiatives focussing on the contribution that all individuals and groups in the community can make and generating cohesion that way.

Secondly, because it encourages separation and communalist politics. If we move the focus from groups towards individuals and society as a whole then I think we can cut through this.

Some of the criticism of the most high-profile atheists, secularists and humanists — most prominently Richard Dawkins — claims he's just as "fanatical" as his opponents. How do you see people like Dawkins and others in the so-called "Atheist" movement?

"Fanatical" suggests a person who sticks to his or her theories and prejudices at all costs and in the face of any logical evidence to the contrary. It seems impossible to me to apply the word to people whose beliefs are by definition proselytising and open to correction when new evidence becomes available.

One of me criticisms of e.g. Dawkins would be that he seems to receive of religious belief as merely a stupid, wrong idea and he's right then the world would be fine. How can we develop critiques of ideas that also understand them in their material, social context and understand the reasons people turn to such ideas?

Most people who identify themselves as members of a religious group do so for reasons other than a sincere doctrinal conviction. There is even evidence to suggest that most people who practice a religion are socially similar without profound belief.

The comfortable habit of worship and observance, the solidarity of a community — both real and imagined, the cultural loyalty that generates, the yearning for a better life to come or a bigger story of which we can be part: all these are just as important in the ad-hocery of individuals to religious identities.

If you choose to address these as problems than one possible basis for doing so is that they spring from a false idea and so I don't think that an emphasis on the lack of foundation for religious belief in reality is a well-headed approach.

I have met many people in the course of my work who have had their religious opinions changed by Richard's books. If you want to address the other motivations that people have for religious identities — those other than sincere belief — I suppose you need strategies that will provide those things that religion offers: a structure, community, and meaning.

What can progressive atheists, secularists and humanists usefully do in the current climate to reverse the damage and values against an apparent resurgence of organised religion or religious ideas?

The purpose of the British Humanist Association is to give support to those with non-religious beliefs and to counter religious privilege and discrimination. I think that non-religious people (who are rarely those we can see that we call humanists) need to be more self-confident in setting their own worldview as coherent and respectable, rich in values and in ways of making meaning in life.

I think that secularists — religious and non-religious — need to be robust in making the case for a politics that treats us all as equal citizens of a single community rather than as members of groups, privileging religious categories.

Workers rally against EDL

By Luke Atterton

The far-right, racist English Defence League demonstrated outside the Home Office in central London on 17 April.

The protest was formally against the government's failure to deport Islamist ideologue Abu Qatada (though the Guardian reported on the same day that the government has in fact deported Qatada and is making fresh attempts to deport him).

In reality the EDL action was,probably,a bile-filled demonstration of anti-Muslim hatred, withseg-hells and death threats against counter-protesters.

The Unite Against Fascism campaign, with the support of the PCS union, which organises thousands of Home Office staff, organised the counter-demonstration against the EDL. It was made up mostly of PCS reps and activists, with some student support (both groups including AWL members). Despite the short notice, there were about 400 members of the EDL, diminishing to around 30 EDLers. Unfortunately, because the EDL members arrived late and the counter-protest dispersed first, at one point they were in a majority.

The calls made my some UAF spokespeople for the EDL to move or disperse so we could rely on labour movement self-defence and community organisation to keep the EDL off the street, not the police force.
“Edubusiness” vultures circle

By Pat Yarker

This week owners and administrators of private capital will assemble in London to share advice about how state education can be further opened up to their insur- gency. Education spectator magazine (yes, it does exist) is hosting, a conference to bring together established edubusinesses such as Pearson (owners of the “authoring body” or exam-board Edexcel), academy-sponsors (including Balfour Beatty and ARK), and representatives of pri- vate equity companies, some of whom have given large amounts of money to Edexcel-owning Michael Gove in recent years.

DONATIONS

According to materials published by the GMB union, Gove has received almost £500,000 in dona- tions, sponsorship and remuneration, the bulk of it in the last four years. The biggest individual contribution came in 2009 as a cash donation of £150,000 from Martin Calderbank, a founder of a private equity group Stirling Square Capital Partners. In 2010 Mr Calderbank set up Agilitas Partners, and someone from Agilitas will attend the Education Investor conference. Agilitas’s website states that the company can be made these days by in- vesting in businesses, which will benefit from “favourable political trends”. Such as extending the opportunity to set up for-profit schools, per- mission for “surplus” state-funding and the over the course of its ten- year contract. Private capi- tal already runs chains of Academies, and funds in- dependent schools. Such capital must ex- pand, and find new mar- kets. Perhaps this prompted the donations made to Gove not only by the founder of Agilitas but also by representatives of a company owned by Sover- eign Capital, who finance the Alpha Plus Group of independent schools, and by Aurum Fund Manage- ment, who put money into ARK?

SPONSORING

Sovereign Capital is a sponsoring workshops at this week’s confer- ence. The information about the sessions indicates what lies in store for English state education if private capital gets its wish. A further drastic reduc- tion of the role of local au- thorities in education will help pave the way for schooling-for-profit. Public spending cuts will enforce “partnership” with private capital; job losses, pay cuts and at- tacks on working conditions will drive down operating costs, and “sur- plus” government proper- ties may be handed over as sites for profit-making schools. Among those addressing the conference are the Chief Executive Officer of the Alpha Plus Group, the Managing Director of Senso Learning, the Vice- Chancellor of London Met- ropolitan University, and former New Labour Educa- tion Secretary Charles Clarke.

ACOLYTES

Gove won’t be present, but his acolytes will be. Confirmed attendees in- clude representatives of the Education Investor, the right-wing think-tank which Gove helped to found, and the New Schools Network, which does the donkey-work for companies or in- dividuals setting up “free schools.”

NEWS

By Rhodri Evans

It’s time for another political initiative, so Ed Miliband and his advisors seem to have told him. A follow-up on the NHS to Miliband’s decla- ration a short while ago that we “have three months to save the Health Service”? No, the chartered doctors have decided that is bor- ing.

So, on 15 April, Miliband called for a conference of socially liberal political-party fundings.

It looks as if Miliband, or the workers, think that is “clever”. Labour gained the high ground by declaim- ing for a ban on dona- tions above £5,000, which has been defeated, and the Tories won’t take it up anyway.

In fact it is dangerous. The Labour party is undeniably counter-at- tacked on union political fundings, propos- ing that the law be changed so that union members have to “opt in” to pay political levies, rather than “opt- ing out” if they don’t want to.

Miliband’s proposal also compromises a principle. Unions should be able to make large political donations: that is one of the few ways in which working-class candidates who are not eligible to fund expensive operations, can act colle- ctively to realise the advantages of wealth in politics.

On Tuesday 17th, Miliband’s “clever” idea backfired further, as a multi-million pound Labour donor Assem Allam pro- pounded that “parties should be funded by ‘in- dependent’ individuals such as himself who would only gain tax re- ductions if they gave to more than one party” (Financial Times, 17 April).

The NUS should show the right approach: that working-class candidates who are capable of taking ac- tion on a mass level, in the unions, and show our- selves that we are capable of mobilising to support any movement in defence of the NHS.

The campaign which fights for student democracy

Edd Bauer, from the Na- tional Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, is standing for the position of Vice President Welfare in elec- tions at the forthcoming conference of the National Union of Students (26-28 April). Ed Malby spoke to him about the issues.

“This conference will not be facing any new choices. It’s the same fight along the same lines. But this year there is a real, serious chal- lenge from the left, an al- ternative vision, with candidates who look like they might win.

“There is a groundswell of support for free educa- tion and a national demon- stration in the first term. The movement has consol- idated itself and captured formal structures.”

“It is true that left- wingers and NFCAP sup- porters have had major victories in student elections at UCL and Edinburgh, and the left can be seen as effec- tively politically leading the union. The true is that Birm- ingham Uni and several other colleges as well.

“The next period is one in which issues of student union autonomy; of how the state and act and democracy will be raised by radical new stu- dent union executive teams.”

Edd explained the situa- tion this new generation of student union activists will have to face up to. The democratic structures of most student unions have been subverted and under- mined by the increasing in- fluence of union managers, external trustees (often local capitalists are chosen to sit on the all- powerful trustee boards of institutions and corpor- ate structures.

“For the ill in student activity in the 2000s, when New Labour changed student unions into charities limited by guarantee, they became un- recognisable as unions — with bosses and [capitalist “welfarists”] on stu- dent union boards and trusts.”

“This is that the student movement has kicked off again these structures have had to become, with bosses the test a test, with the threat to trust. And the workers behind closed doors as their own petty factions.

“We need to reverse the ultra-vires legislation of 2006 that made student union non- exempt chariti- ties; it needs to reverse the legislation that stops stu- dents from pronouncing on broader political issues; it needs to reverse the process of giving managers a greater role in running the student union; it needs to win back the right to give money to political parties within union structures; it needs to keep the news, and be prepared to go on a limb and take action.

“The NUS needs to be on- hand to condemn un- elected boards and student managers who are running the unions behind closed doors as their own petty factions.”

“We need to reverse the Edd Bauer was arrested (and jailed) for dropping this banner at a conference, then suspended from his position in the student union — by his university’s management!”

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**Why I changed my name to seem more Muslim**

SWP student leader Mark Bergfeld got up and told the conference AWL students had proposed the amendment because the AWL supports war on Iran. But our amendment didn’t remove a single word from the original motion. It so happened that the back page of our paper that week also included a headline saying “SWP members lie because their position was so embarrassing.”

SWPers made arguments along the lines of: “We think the AWL’s opposition to war on Iran is unreliable. In the past they published an article saying Israel had good reason to strike Iran’s nuclear program, is that a record we can rely on? In the war on drugs, was it a racist and anti-white attempt to debate us? Why don’t they do that? I think partly because many of them are not very confident in their arguments, and partly because slandering opponents is increasingly part of their political DNA. We also noted that this kind of nonsense in the election for University of London Union Vice President. AWL member Daniel Lemberger Cooper, who won the election, was ridden on the back of a surging wave of support for a “real Labour” candidate, an unimpressive lawyer, was a Mirpuri. Galloway went for Muslim votes, but his victory cannot be explained exclusively to the rise of Galloway, who was called a “traitor” at rally in Bradford. The Labour candidate, an unimpressive lawyer, was a Mirpuri. The goover- ing to Galloway of Labour’s election agent in Bradford may have been important. It has to be dou- bted whether the Bradford effect is transferable — even if Galloway himself, let alone by groups like the SWP and SF, who have been openly disgusted with him in recent years and only now swell round to praise him. The AWL is right to be sceptical about George Galloway’s victory. He has a long history, since the 1990s, of promoting himself on the back of political operations paid for by despotic elites (Pakistan the Emirates, Saudi Arabia). His campaigning over Iraq was heavily financed by money funnelled to it through a colleague, Fawaz, Zunairak, who in turn got the cash from Saddam Hussein. Voters in Bradford will not have known this shady history, or may have known but not reckoned (thinking all politicians are shady anyway) that it isn’t decisive. Vote for the social democrats in and put them on the spot seems to fit with Respect. John Grimsdian, from website

**A Galloway spring?**

Many on the left have seized on George Galloway’s stunning victory in Bradford West (March) as proof that the recently-slowing trickle of left-Labour electioneering can now become a surge. Socialist Worker (14 April) suggested: “The Galloway ef- fect means the country is wide open. If on 3 May Respect won council seats in Bradford while else- where radical left candidates such as Michael Lavallette [SWP] and Dave Neilist [Socialist Party] won their seats. This would provide a platform for the left as a whole to re- group and create a serious left of Labour alternative.”

The first difficulty with this scenario is that the SWP (and the Socialist Party) had no part in the “Galloway effect” — they were an insignificant group of paper backers backing him before polling day — and on all evidence Galloway wants nothing to do with SWP and SP.

TUSC

In the May local elections the Trade Unionist and So- cialist Coalition (TUSC: an operation run by the SP with some — allegedly — the BMF and others) and respect for the involvement from the SP is running 115 candidates. TUSC is also running for the “list” part of the Greater London Assembly election (not in the “constituency” part or the mayoral contest) and for mayor of Liverpool. In every country, where England had had TUSC, SP is running as “Socialist Alternative”, not TUSC.

Galloway’s Respect party, which before Bradford had had almost no support, and had almost lost its council seats last, has lost given a new boost, and will run a slate in Bradford’s council elections. TUSC’s pitch is a “real Labour” poll — a woodently-ex- pressed “anti-cuts” declaration and identification with the working classes (as opposed to socialism). TUSC is backing the working-class political representation beyond the bare word “socialist” — seems unlikely to catch on in the way it did last elections. At the practice of the Left members of the MP known Galloway did in Bradford. And what will be achieved if it did capture the only respectable ballot for the SP? There is no channel from TUSC successes, if they should happen, to a revitalisation of the labour movement or the left.

But we shall see.

Why didn’t Socialists welcome George Galloway’s victory? He has a long history, since the 1990s, of promoting himself on the back of political operations paid for by despotic elites (Pakistan the Emirates, Saudi Arabia). His campaigning over Iraq was heavily financed by money funnelled to it through a colleague, Fawaz, Zunairak, who in turn got the cash from Saddam Hussein. Voters in Bradford will not have known this shady history, or may have known but not reckoned (thinking all politicians are shady anyway) that it isn’t decisive. Vote for the social democrats in and put them on the spot seems to fit with Respect. John Grimsdian, from website

**Workers’ Power splits**

About 15 members of the British Workers Power group, a third of the organisation, have resigned, along with some others in the WP-linked international ten- dency.

The British organisers are mostly workers and students in their 20s — essentially the leadership of the new layer of WP members who expelled the group’s trade unionist old guard in 2002. It is a minority of those who helped to expelled, now constituted as Permanent Revolution.

They have produced a document. A simple proposal for a new anti-capitalist left, in which they propose a regroup- ment of socialists and radical activists around “revolutionary”, “anti-capitalist” but not “Leninist-Trotskyist” principles.

Part of the reason this group left Workers Power is its spli- ting regime, in which public unanimity was required. Those resigning no longer believe disagreements should be hidden from public view, which is progress. However, they seem — it is not clear — to be also rejecting the whole idea of seeking to work out and fight for a clear political programme.

Moreover they have not constituted themselves as an or- ganisation, creating the possibility of an apologetic style of activity held together by their former experience in WP and the fetish of a new “anticapitalist organisation”.

They are probably reensuing WP’s disastrous legacy on issues like Stalinism, imperialism and Israel-Palestine. If anything, their statement that they still believe the work- ing class is the “crucial agent of revolutionary change...” suggests a drift away from class politics.

But the problem with WP is not too much class pol- itics! A tradition which maintains that North Korea is a “socialist state”, that the “Third World” is a “post-colonial platforming” reformist Iraqi trade unionists while pro- moting the fascistic Iraq ‘resistance’, is precisely the kind of politics who uses his undoubted talents to good effect.
On 27 April Barclays Bank bosses will face protests from shareholders at their annual general meeting. They will question the bank’s decision to pay a £5.7 million extra to boss Bob Diamond last year in the guise of a “tax equalisation payment”, and the total £17.7 million paid out to him.

Another two bosses, Jerry del Missier and Rich Ricci, are being paid £6.7 million and £6.5 million.

“How the Tories fuel the inequality crisis

In the UK as in the USA, the slice of income taken by the top one per cent has more than doubled since the 1970s. That long-term trend had a momentary hiccup in 2009, but on average earnings in 2010–1, to almost £2.7 million each, while average gross earnings for full-time workers fell 5.9% in real terms between April 2007 and November 2011.

The Government’s and the bosses’ drive to push down real wages and “social wages” is not just, or even mainly, a matter of healing deficits. It is a drive to use the crisis in order to impose a shift in the balance of class forces — to set a lower baseline for workers’ attempts to recoup standards whenever a general economic recovery comes, and to ensure that this recovery starts with a harsh profit rate from day one.

So far the Tories are getting away with it. George Osborne’s move in the Budget to cut the top tax rate from 50% to 45% shows their smugness.

But they are getting away with it only because the labour movement is not mobilising the great pool of resentment fights hardest for its slice.

Support the AWL

Help the AWL raise £20,000

We raised £377 this week from donations, new standing orders and for May Day adverts. Thanks to AWL Australia, Tim, Liam Aidan, Chris and a reader in Sheffield.

Total raised so far: £12,002

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Pakistan: Islamists fight against women's rights

Islamist parties have taken to the streets to oppose the ratification of a law which would penalise domestic violence in Pakistan. The Islamist campaigners confronted the bigots outside parliament last week.

The Muslims’ arguments against the legislation include: preventing domestic violence is “Western” and that the Bill is a copy of Indian legislation.

A spokesperson for Jamaat Ulama-e-Islam Faid said, “We will not let the opposition include: preventing domestic violence is an issue of the Constitution and Islamic Shariah,” who depend on American funds, children and domestic workers.

Farzana Bari, a women rights activist, commented: “This is a very soft bill, it gives a minimum punishment of three months and maximum of three years, but it is important that it is passed.

Violence against women in Pakistan is widespread. According to Human Rights Commission figures, the number of cases that 943 women were the victims of honour killings in 2011.

Tunisian union defies ban

Riot police enforcing the ruling Islamist party’s ban on protests in central Tunis, used tear gas and batons against thousands of union-organised protesters on Monday October 10.

The workers had assembled to protest against a police attack on an unemployed workers march. There are 700,000 unemployed workers in Tunisia. Amna Guellali, a researcher for the Tunisian Human Rights Watch, said the police had beaten some members of the constituent assembly who had participated in the march. Gaellali said the clashes appeared to mark a new level of conflict between the government and the secular left. “People went down to the Avenue Bourguiba with the spirit of a showdown with the government,” she said. “It was a feeling of: ‘We are going to defy this ban just as we did during Ben Ali’s rule.’

The ban on assembling in the Avenue Bourguiba — symbolic centre of the uprising against Ben Ali’s dictatorship last year — was imposed after 28 March. The Bill for a group of secular artists and ultra-conservative Muslims that both staged marches there. Fighting took place after the Islamists attacked the artists.

The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGT) has declared that the 1 May celebration will be held in Avenue Bourguiba and signalled its intention to break the government’s protest ban.

UK/CONGO Justice for Daniel Ngonga Nsevelo!

Congolese asylum seeker Daniel Ngonga Nsevelo was attacked by private security guards working for the UK Border Agency during a failed attempt to deport him.

Daniel, a friend of Angolan asylum seeker Jimmy Mubenga, who was murdered by G4S security guards, has been on hunger strike for nearly a month in protest at his treatment. He is being detained at the Colnbrook Bypass centre near Heathrow Airport.

Daniel has been as ill over three times over the course of a separate deportation attempt.

Sign the petition to demand his release at bit.ly/TuyOE

Greece: defy election blackmail!

By Theodora Poleata

The Greek government is about to announce Parliamentary elections for 6 May. All the mainstream political parties are trying to shift the political discourse from austerity measures to racist and xenophobic hysteria and law and order policies, with promises to spend money on building concentration camps for all “illegal immigrants”. Then an individual’s mobile suicide spectacularly ruined their plans.

The political suicide of retired pharmacist Dimitris Xristoulas, his death by self-immolation against the Constitution and the secular left. “People are not voting to elect a government or a political party but to take revenge against all pro-memorandum parties, their policies and the effects of those policies, preposterous interests; drastic decline in living standards and working conditions. They take place just before the June implementation of a new package of anti-working class measures of 15 billion.

Troika

The previous European government and the current coalition, in cooperation with the EU-IMF, the EU-Troika, have systematically attacked wages, pensions, benefits, pen funds.

They have dramatically increased indirect and direct taxation on workers while decreasing taxation of the capitalists and the financial speculators.

Unemployment has reached one million. Bit by bit, the welfare state is being destroyed. Schools and hospitals are being stricken by an increase in demand and underfunding, an increase in electricity and water bills and transportation tickets make even basic necessities a luxury.

Many workers have not been paid.

People are partially, temporally or completely unemployed, with no rights and no collective negotiating powers.

A massive emigration of young people is taking place, for the first time after the Second World War.

Homelessness has drawn people not to undernegogulate if the Greek people want to safeguard Greece’s position in the Eurozone.

For various reasons, including the political weakness of the left, these elections will not raise the issue of a workers’ government.

However, they could lay the foundation for the abandonment and further pushing back of the memorandum parties. That would create better conditions for the resurgence of a more militant, compact working-class movement.

Ultimately the class struggle will be decisive, but those elections and leaves the seeds in determining whether Greece will be a guardian of counter revolution or a prototype of the resistance and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system.

Our struggle, our strikes, our civil disobedience movements are the decisive weapon of the workers’ class in the struggles to come.

However the power of our voting should not be underestimated. The rejection of the pro memorandum parties in the coalition government, of Pasok and ND but all the acolytes and splinter groups that are willing to be part of a coalition government after the elections.

Fascists

Special attention should be paid to the political isolation of the openly National Fascist party of Xrisi Agi.

The formation of a broad political unification front to confront and smash the fascists in the streets and their electoral appeal is desperately urgent.

There should be no dialogue with the Fascists, they should be politically exposed. It needs to be explained that the Fascists are not part of the anti-memorandum spectum as the mainstream media try to claim. If Xrisi Agi enter parliament it will be a terrible, historical turning point.

The strikes, occupations, demonstrations, and civil disobedience movements have to be expressed on election day with electoral support for the left — that is the only consistent and politically valid anti memorandum vote.

It is the duty of the left to raise the issue of workers’ government, workers’ power, workers’ control — socialism in the here and now, not postponed to the distant future. In the context of this worst historical crisis, there is no time to wait under the class struggle, the Troika and the fascists bury us.

During the last years of struggle blueprints of workers’ control were created — the refuse workers’ and GENOPS-DH workers struggles, and the Office of the National Statistics workers movement.

The demand for direct democracy and self-governance must be expressed in a confused and incompelete way during last year’s indignant square movement.

What is needed: 1. Uncompromising class struggle and class confrontation against the Troika, financial speculata, capitalists, fascists, strippers and imperialism.

Any middle of the road solution will be a “progressive” government and let the right-wing “centre” is an illusion and will ultimately betray the working class struggle.

Whenever government is elected on 6 May election, it should be opposed with the usual 24 hours strikes but with an escalation of our struggle until we can organise a general political strike to break the memorandum and all pro memorandum parties.

2. To be the direct action of the workers’ movement for a general move ment within each workplace, neighbour houd, college, outside of the constraints of the trade union bureaucracy.

3. A program of action connected to transitional demands, demands linked to our strategic struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

4. The restructuring and resyne withing of the workers’ movement for a building of a new revolutionary political party which will attract the movement of both KKE and SYRIZA, and the most advanced of the Pasok workers, but most importantly the most vast guard and militant sections of workers and youth that are emerging from the escalation of the class struggle against the anti-austerity movements.

5. Internationalist coodination of our struggle with movements in the EU and across the world for a world wide socialist revolution. We do not fight to establish socialism in one country but to break the isolation of the rest of the world.

Our struggle hinges lies neither in the EU nor in national isolation, but in international coodination of our class struggle with all the workers movements of Europe and the establishment of the united socialist states of Euro pe.
An appeal to the NPA: don’t split!

By Martin Thomas

FEATURE

For the French Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anti-
capitalist Party — NPA) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), core of the NPA, to split now would be a great setback not only for activists in France but for all of us who fight for working-class self-emancipation, all across Europe.

Reports from France point to a “cold split” already, and an open split after the legislative assembly elections in June. At the end of March, tensions exploded in a public battle over who would get the government subsidy due to the heirs of the LCR, under French law, on the basis of the LCR’s score in the 2007 election. The LCR minority, as we understand it, proposed that only 57% of the cash go to the NPA treasury, the other 43% going to the minority and to another group which left the LCR in 2009.

We are glad to read that the prospect of the dispute being decided in the bourgeois courts has been avoided for now, but it still seems that changes have been settled.

Leaders of the minority have publicly expressed their view that the NPA would do better to support Jean-Luc Mélenchon and other forces clustered around Mélenchon’s own Party and other forces.

A reasonable argument can also be made for backing Mélenchon. He has rallied support far beyond the ambit of the CP, to political vapidity. But for a split to be justified, its rationale must be such that it can be explained to the activist working-class public that the alternative would be enervating compromise or paralysis.

For revolutionary socialists to have different opinions on tactics in an election is normal. To split over such an episodic issue is wrong.

The shake-out has caused more disarray than it needed to be. The shake-out has caused more disarray than it needed to be. Because many LCR and NPA people hoped for some-thing miraculous — hoped that the shift from the LCR format to the NPA format would somehow enable them to jump over the problem that revolutionary socialist ideas as yet convince only a small minority (although a bigger minority in France than in Britain). There was much talk about “new epoch, new programme, new party”. But to desire new thinking, as a generally good thing, is not the same as producing it.

Too often, in practice, the desire for a “new programme” has led to jarring the “old” programme, and replacing it by no programme at all, by a vocal and militant tone on “left” causes as defined by broad public opinion, rather than by a carefully-analysed revision in light of new conditions.

One strand of that evolution which we have particularly noticed has been on Israel and Palestine. The LCR would explain (sometimes more clearly, sometimes less so) that “two states appears to be the only way to open, eventually, the road to a federal or confederal solution for the two groups occupying the same land” (bit.ly/lcrisrael). The NPA only echoes “bread” anti-Israel indignation, in militant tones, a distancing working-class writers front of an independent approach geared to uniting Arab and Jewish workers.

A similar evolution on other questions has led to debate in the NPA being narrowed down, more and more, to squabbles over electoral tactics. That, combined with impa-tient desires magically to escape the irritations of revolu-tionary socialism still for now being a small-minority cause, has led to a disarray.

We appeal to all NPA activists to rally against the split.
The first round of the French presidential elections is on 22 April, with the run-off between the top two candidates on 6 May.

The latest opinion polls put right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy, Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), on 26-27% and François Hollande, candidate of the Socialist Party (PS), similar to the British Labour Party), on 28%-30%. These will almost certainly be the top two candidates in the run-off. Here, Hollande has only 10% ahead of Sarkozy in the polls. Marine Le Pen, the candidate of the fascist Front National (FN — National Front) has also been polling well.

A debate has opened up on the far left about the Jean-Luc Mélenchon candidacy, currently on 16-17% in the polls. Mélenchon split from the Socialist Party in 2008 to form the Parti de gauche (PG — Left Party). The PG, the (post-Stalinist) French Communist Party and some smaller fragments together make up the Front de Gauche (FG — Left Front) for the 2012 election.

The Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA — New Anti-capitalist Party), France’s biggest non-Stalinist far-left group, is running auto worker Philippe Poutou. Lutte Ouvrière (LO — Workers’ Fight), another sizable Trotskyist party, is running Nathalie Arthaud. LO and the NPA’s predecessor organisation, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire — Revolutionary Communist League, have in the past scored around 5% in presidential polls.

This time, however, Poutou and Arthaud’s projected votes are nowhere near the 10% the LCR and LO achieved between them in 2002.

Some on the French revolutionary left are backing Mélenchon. Others stick with Poutou and Arthaud. Below, we print views from French comrades, translated by Ed Maltby.

Create revolutionary current in Left Front

By Le Militant, a socialist journal

In Le Militant, we said in June 2011 that Jean-Luc Mélenchon could come out in the lead in the first round. Not because of our illusions, or enthusiasm, but by cold analysis, which is this: the relations between classes. We are cooling a head: whether it will succeed or not, the movement aims to undo Sarkozy and confront the regime of the 5th Republic and the boss class. We are aiming for that confrontation. If Mélenchon is in the lead then the confrontation will come faster and stronger, and if not it will for that confrontation. If Mélenchon is in the lead then the democratic government which repudiates the so-called analysis, which is this: the relations between classes.

François Hollande, the Socialist Party presidential candidate workers who have suffered successive defeats since 2002, notably in the strikes of 2003 and 2010, giving a political opening to a majority rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005. This did not signify a nationalist rejection, but a refusal of the constitutional freedom given to bosses and to the markets to do what they wanted without social restraint.

An anecdote: at the start of the electoral campaign, the leaflets distributed by the PS were blue, the colour that Sarkozy’s UMP uses a lot. Now, PS leaflets are red — the same colour the Left Front uses.

Mass rallies at Bastille on 18 March (120,000 people), at Toulouse (70,000 people), Lille, and Marseille (100,000) have expressed the need for a clearly left-wing campaign to beat Sarkozy. Activists at these rallies will not be satisfied just with voting but want to mobilise beyond the ballot box to stop cuts and impose measures which favour the working population.

MAJORITY

Beyond the presidential election, the left as a whole must fight to win a large parliamentary majority, in which the Left Front has substantial weight.

There too, nothing is inevitable. If Hollande is elected, he will want to limit the influence of the Left Front by asserting PS supremacy in the future parliamentary majority, or by looking for alliances with the centre, or by trying to buy the entry of Left Front ministers into his own government. For now, given that Hollande intends to apply a programme of managing the debt crisis, there can be no question of entering such a government. That would certainly be the first key test of the longevity of the Left Front after the elections.

In any case, with the debt crisis and the “deficits”, and the predictable policy of Hollande for managing the crisis in the same way as Zapatero (Spain) or Papandreou (Greece), social tension will not let up. There is no possible half-way choice either managing the debt at the expense of the workers and those relying on the welfare state, by means of privatisations, sackings and cutting wages, or the reconstruction of public services and worker rights through measures aimed against capitalists. Either ratification of the Sarkozy-Merkel treaty, or repudiation of the debt: no half measures are possible!

Furthermore it is important to note that this is the first time that a left-wing electoral campaign has put the need to finish with the 5th Republic front-and-centre, and the need to return to power and that beginning of a new front-and-centre. This radical democratic demand is very bad news for all institutions created over the last thirty years through decentralisation and regionalisation, likewise for all the European institutions which are European in name only and which are all political tools for the exclusive benefit of capitalists and bankers.

For the Left Front to play a useful role in the coming period, it needs to orient their anti-capitalist direction. It is the responsibility of all those who support anti-capitalism and real socialism to work to this end.

This is why Le Militant is proposing to all to create a revolutionary current within the Left Front, putting for the adoption of an adequate programme to meet the crisis of the capitalists and aid the political and social mobilisation at all levels.

2012 has not yet finished surprising us!

Organise the mistrust!

By Yvan Lemaître, NPA Paris

“Philippe Poutou storms in!” wrote Le Monde the day before one of the main TV broadcasts of the presidential election campaign in France.

Effectively, in a very difficult context, the NPA campaign has seen a turning point ten days before the election of 22 April. Its candidate, Ford car factory worker Philippe Poutou, has met with a lot of sympathy in sticking to a de-}
Rating at over 13% in the polls and drawing some support in L’Étincelle, a faction of the NPA, Ménédonchon is two-faced. Mélenchon is now not new to politics. Joining the Socialist Party (PS) in 1976, he became a member of its leading committee in 1983 (at the same time as his current rival Francois Hollande). Under Mitterrand he progressed within the PS apparatus. He was elected as a PS senator in 1986, and became a minister in the last left government, in charge of vocational education from 2000 to 2002. The career, then, of a PS careerist.

In his programme, there are certain social demands, of which some appear radical, so long as you don’t look too closely. For example, the demand for a minimum salary of €1,700 a month for all, but, watch out, €1,700 “gross” (in fact €1,350 net — the demand of the far left, LO and NPA, is for €1,700 net as a minimum immediately), having taken care to spell out in an interview in a bosses’ newspaper that it would rise to €1,700 “at the end of the parliament” and only for “activities not exposed to international competition”… you might well ask who will really benefit? This is a simple example of a two-faced politics: one politics for the bosses (that is, the politics that he would really support) and another for the workers.

On the question of job losses though, Mélenchon only has one face. He prefers to play the French nationalist card by supporting different protectionist measures against outsourcing businesses abroad… goodbye to the slogan for “outsourcing redundancies” [a widespread, established far-left demand in France], a slogan which would allow workers, if they raised it in struggle, to defend themselves and unite against the bosses whatever their nationality. It is actually difficult for Jean-Luc Mélenchon to not use the word “France” in every sentence, whose “universal interests” he lauds. We’re dealing with an imperialist language here, scarcely dressed up with “left-wing” values.

Because on international questions, Mélenchon is clear: he is the fervent defender of the interests of France, or to put it another way, of the French boss class. The last example to date is the praise from the arms boss Serge Dassault and the support he has given to his sale of Rafale fighter jets to India. When he was invited on to France Inter public radio lately, the journalist asked him the following question: “Can one support disarmament, and also cheer on the sale of fighter jets?” Mélenchon’s response: “Let the Russians and the Americans disarm first, and then we’ll talk. France does not threaten anyone!” (He forgot to mention that France is at war in Afghanistan, in Libya, that her army has brought the new President to power in Ivory Coast, etc.) And he continues to express his sympathy for Serge Dassault, the head of the firm of the same name and the sixth richest man in France… Another, slightly older, example is his insistence in affirming his solidarity with French imperialism in the context of the rigged election of Ali Bongo in 2009, the son of Omar Bongo, dictator of Gabon who was supported by French imperialism. An election which assured the continuation of French imperialism and its businesses (Total, Bouygues, Bolloré, Axa, INPI) in his former French colony.

So, what’s left that’s revolutionary in the Mélenchon campaign? I am radical, he suggests, but I remain within the capitalist system! Hence his cleverly-chosen phrases about the “citizens’ revolution” and the “civil insurrection”, which stick contradictory words together. On one side, apparently radical measures, on the other: words which lead to an parliamentary and electoralist highway.

And it is exactly there that the principal difference between revolutionaries and the Left Front lies. They call for revolution… via the ballot box. The fact remains that this campaign has succeeded in attracting many workers and many youth, with whom the revolutionaries have an interest in discussing. But then two problems arise: how to explain, despite of or because of these limits, the popularity and dynamic of the Mélenchon campaign? How can revolutionaries approach the problem of talking to the workers and youth drawn into the campaign?

Mélenchon is two-faced

By comrades in L’Étincelle, a faction of the NPA

Ratings at over 13% in the polls and drawing some 100,000 people to the Bastille, the Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon has a real dynamic. This dynamic is all the more interesting because the press presents him sometimes as a “revolutionary” leader. But is that really what he is?

Mélenchon is new to politics. Joining the Socialist Party (PS) in 1976, he became a member of its leading committee in 1983 (at the same time as his current rival Francois Hollande). Under Mitterrand he progressed within the PS apparatus. He was elected as a PS senator in 1986, and became a minister in the last left government, in charge of vocational education from 2000 to 2002. The career, then, of a PS careerist.

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This candidacy allows us to raise our programme, for the short period of the election, in front of millions of people. It is a chance that we are taking to popularise our ideas and develop our political implantation.
Abolish money without class struggle?

Janet Burstall reviews Life without money: building fair and sustainable communities, edited by Anita Nelson and Frans Timmerman

This book argues that abolition of “the market” is the key to replacing capitalism. The medium of the market is money, so abolition of money is the way to “non-market socialism”, a moneyless, wageless, classless, stateless world.

After the poisonous decades of Stalinism and the failure of social-democracy to challenge capitalism, it is welcome to find socialists looking for a different vision of socialism. The vision in this edited collection is based on examples of people managing to live more or less without money, i.e. outside of but parallel to capitalism.

These people — rural, indigenous, peasant and domestic workers who are unwaged, squatters, workers-refuseniks — are seen as the agency that can create the new non-market socialism. Several of the authors and the editors of this book claim to base their arguments on aspects of Marxist theory, especially Marx’s critique of money and commodities. Yet none of them explains why they have ditched and contradicted most of Marx’s analysis, particularly on the role of the working class.

“The market” is not what defines capitalism. Capitalist relations differ basically from pre-capitalist market relations in that they are based on a new commodity, a new market, the labour market that was constructed as recently as 200 years ago. This created the working class, whose members must enter the labour market, to receive a wage, to have money, to be able to buy the necessities of life. The editors of Life without money recognise the need to reorganise production. But their preferred agency, non-wage labour, has no concretely imaginable historical role in doing so. Failing to do a Marxian analysis of history and class relations, to explain the origin of current conditions, there is no understanding of the current motives and desires of labour and capital, no picture of how interests and actions in the present could unfold and lead to socialism.

Agents of socialism?

Unavoidably this makes the book utopian in the sense that Marx described. It is both highly critical of existing society and in that way useful, but because it lacks a sense of “historically created conditions of emancipation” it is in effect a fantasy, personal invention without connection to actual historical forces.

Any vision of the future carries within it the seeds of dictatorship rather than democracy, unless it is able to mobilise desire for its fundamentals. That is expressed, formulated for and taken up by a mass democratic collective.

CLASS

The working class is the only class that organises itself against capital, with more or less independence and democracy, depending on the time and place.

No other social force has shown this potential, yet Life without money shows no interest in the politics and development of the labour movement.

The conclusion of the book reads like a fantasy that could only be achieved by conquest of the rich “nort” by an alliance of the poor meta-industrials of the “south”, and work refuseniks squatting allies in the “north”, to enforce a “contrarian” strategy leading to more equal consumption, lower in the north, and higher in the south.

Local communities would be as self-sufficient as possible, and exchange of goods between communities would be reduced to a minimum. Essentials would be produced for and taken up by a mass democratic collective.

Learning about our tradition

Mike Wood reviews the new online archive of the first series of the New Politics journal, from 1960 to 1978. This is a valuable resource for those interested in the history of the socialist movement and should ensure a wider readership for a tradition of thought that has largely been forgotten by the left today.

New Politics was started by Julius and Phyllis Jacobson in 1963, following the collapse of the Independent Socialist League in 1958. The right wing of the ISL, led by Max Shachtman, had negotiated to take the ISL into the loosely federated Alliance for Workers’ Liberty in 1958. The right wing of the ISL that had opposed Shachtman’s move to the left had left, the ISL in 1958 left many former ISL members concerned about being involved, but he declined.

Up until now, New Politics has only been available in a few University libraries and private collections. Despite this, some articles here will be well known, for example Draper’s 1972 version of “The Two Seals of Socialism”. Other pieces are only now widely available thanks to the UNZ archive, such as the debate following the publication of the “Two Seals” between Draper and Max Namad. Anyone interested in Draper’s idea of socialism from below should read this exchange in the Spring, Summer, and Fall 1966 issues, in which he clarifies many of his views.

New Politics identifies with. Anyone interested in learning more about that tradition will find this archive very helpful.

• Visit the archive at: unz.org/pub/newpolitics

Working class politics and anarchism

How do the revolutionary anti-capitalist traditions of Marxism and anarchism relate to each other? What are the differences, and where are the commonalities?

This pamphlet brings together articles, debates and exchanges between members of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty and anarchist activists, which they appeared in Solidarity newspaper during 2011.

£5 online at http://allforall.com/fit5 or post a cheque to TAWL* at AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

Mick Shaw

Mick Shaw’s death robs the labour movement of one of its finest representatives. He was a socialist, internationalist and trade unionist who devoted his whole life to the working class and the left.

Mick was best known as a firefighter and Fire Brigades Union member, where he rose to become the national president. His work in the FBU started with the 1977 fire fighters strike and finished with picket duty during the London strikes in 2010. He was the London representa tive on the FBU executive for a decade and was a perceptive, critical voice during the 2002-03 pay strikes. He was proud to have been on a regular firefighter’s wage throughout his time as an union official.

Mick was rightly regarded for his wider labour movement work too. He took part in dozens of campaign. He was an avid reader of the left and bourgeois press and had a keen understanding of socialist debates. He was well informed and always willing to discuss politics. Even when we disagreed about Cuba and other international and national questions, I always learned something new from the engagement with him.

Mick was a force for culture in the labour movement. He was an articulate speaker who enjoyed both theory and comedy. He was a skilled organiser and activist. He was a gifted chair who could hold any meeting with calming authority. He was the sort of person you would want to be alongside in a struggle — solid, dependable and able to do as one wants.

He has influenced thousands of workers and his contribution was valued by everyone who knew him.

Paul Hampton

10 SOLIDARITY
In this week’s Solidarity we begin a serialisation of a symposium on the “third-camp” left in America — the organisations which opposed both Stalinism and western capitalism. This essay is the first in an original symposium originated by the Workers’ Party led by Max Shachtman, which split from the “orthodox Trotskyist” Socialist Workers’ Party (no relation to the British group of the same name) in 1939/40.

We have interviewed activists from a range of backgrounds, most still active on the left, about their recollections of involvement in or around the Workers’ Party and its successor organisations — the Independent Socialist League, and the Independent Socialists and the International Socialists (IS).

We begin the serialisation with a piece from Dan La Botz, which discusses the debates in IS about “industrial international Socialists (IS).”

**BACKGROUND**

I grew up in a working-class neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. My family’s politics, as I grew up, however, were anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist, pro-socialist, and statutory. My mother Betty, a grocery clerk, was fiercely loyal to her union, the Retail Clerks.

While still a junior high school student, then living in the small town of Imperial Beach, California, on the U.S.-Mexican border, in 1958 or so, my father bought me a subscription to Liberation magazine which had a third-camp perspective. I immediately began reading it. I was just 12 years old. I was still living in the Civil Rights era, but I did not become an activist until I graduated from high school. Then I began to participate in some anti-war activities. I became a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) while studying literature in graduate school at the University of California at San Diego.

Teaching English literature for a year at Humboldt State College in northern California, I joined a local socialist discussion group, and as that group dissolved I joined the International Socialists (IS), a third-camp socialist organisation. I was re-created by the IS by Wall-Shaeasy and by two pamphlets he gave me: The Two Souls of Socialism by Hal Draper and The New Era of Labor Revolt by Stan Weir. I felt that the IS’s third-camp perspective was similar to what I had read in Wall-Shaeasy and in。“The Free World” is not free and the “Communist” Way is not communist!” for democratic international revolutionary socialism.

In 1968, the IS began a new debate on the question of how to organise socialist ideas in the working class. There were many different ideas about this, influenced by European experiences, past American experience, and by our own efforts in the few cities where we worked.

**UNIONS**

Once the idea was raised of attempting to get jobs in certain industries in order to be involved in certain unions, then the question of the nature of the unions was raised.

Once again, there were a wide variety of ideas — from one that was highly centralized with an extraordinary bureaucracy to others that advocated more dispersed forms of organisation.

Within a year, the group had arrived at a strategic idea of “industrialisation”. This involved moving to selected cities, going into certain industries, and attempting to become members of key union locals [branches]. The group persuaded and encouraged members to carry out this plan. In some cases pressure was applied, but we could not and did not force anyone to do it. I became convinced that the IS strategy made sense, dropped out of graduate school at UCSD, and moved to Chicago in 1971. I worked as a librarian, a social worker, a steel worker, and finally a truck driver.

Over the first few years, as the group industrialised, we turned our meetings and conventions into the work of those comrades who were carrying out this industrialisation strategy. This was both to offer them moral support and to provide political guidance.

That meant that we tended to neglect those members who hadn’t carried out the strategy and continued to be students, or to work as teachers or social workers. Some former members later told me that they were frustrated, even that they were told by some IS leader or other that that they were not longer wanted and were driven out of the group at that time. I think there were very few cases of that.

After 1970 or so, our discussions focused on strikes, contract negotiations, and union elections at the local union and national level, and we turned away from most other topics, with the exception of work on African American criminal justice issues (particularly the Gary Tyler case). We also continued to analyse and discuss the developments in Southern Europe and in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. We attempted to make our branches habitable to the few workers who we now invited to our meetings, which meant focusing on the labour topics where they as workers were often more knowledgeable than us, at least about local issues.

Once industrialised, our strategy was to find allies in the unions — usually the dissidents who had been fighting against the companies and also against the union bureaucracy. Sometimes these were organised groups, sometimes not.

**RANK-AND-FILE**

We did not organise socialist groups in the union, but rather rank-and-file groups open to all. These rank-and-file groups generally published a newsletter in the workplace or a newspaper for the union.

Most of us identified ourselves as socialists to our closest comrades and some of us sold the IS newspaper Workers Power in the workplace. IS members often sold Workers Power in the workplace and elsewhere, both where we worked and others in the same industries or unions, or in other industries or unions.

In the auto industry, our original idea was to join the Black Power movement in the plants — the Dodge Revolution Union Movement (DRUM) and the other groups. But by the time we got jobs in the plants, that movement had been largely crushed and partly co-opted, and no longer existed. Our auto workers formed an alliance with a group of older (white) Trotskyists who had been in the skilled trades for decades. In the telephone industry, our members found allies among various other leftists and activists.

Hal Draper, the long time socialist activist who had been the intellectual leader at the centre of the IS during its first couple of years, came to disagree with the IS’s self-conception and organisational strategy. He felt that the IS, like other groups of the era (Fidelista or Guererrista, Maoist or neo-Stalinist), was too much in the mode of becoming what he called a “micro-sect”. Draper left the group with a few other members to create the intellectual and publishing centre which he saw as more consistent with the Bolshevik tradition.

Draper’s resignation — the loss of our senior intellectual — was a serious blow to our young group. Draper’s long-time comrade, Stan Weir, who had decades of experience in industry and in unions, stayed with the IS. Recognising how Draper’s resignation might demoralise the group, Weir toured the United States speaking to our branches and encouraged us to continue on the path to the working class that we had adopted.

Draper’s position attracted few followers among our young members who were either working on the staff of our organisation or getting jobs in industry. They had already made their commitment to a certain course.

We IS members in the Teamsters’ union worked with rank-and-file activists to create a democratic and militant union reform organisation. We succeeded in inspiring protest demonstrations around the National Master Freight Agreement in 1975, forced the union to call a national strike, and then some of us led wildcat strikes in freight and at UPS in some cities. Based on that work we founded Teamsters for a Democratic Union. I later wrote a book, Rank-And-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union, about the movement.

The recessions of 1973-75 and 1979-81 took the wind out of the Teamster rank-and-file rebellion of that era, just as auto plant closings and steel mill shutdowns stilled activism in those unions for years. When its perspective collapsed, the IS splintered into three groups which became the IS, Workers Power, and the International Socialist Organization (ISO). The split was partly manufactured by Tony Cliff and the British Socialist Workers Party. I remained loyal to the IS, but had many friends in Workers Power, both third-camp organisations.

I was to continue to its earlier party building strategy, in 1979 IS members who wanted to continue rank-and-file industrial organising had created Labor Notes, first a newspaper and later also an educational centre. I wrote for Labor Notes and I also wrote the very popular organising manual, The Troublemaker’s Handbook.

In 1986, Workers Power and also joined with former Socialist Workers Party members to create a new party, a micro-sect which was largely made up of the many third-camp socialists like myself.

As the American left began to revive with the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999, I substantially took a more active role in Solidarity, joined the editorial board of New Politics, and in 2010 while remaining a Solidarity member ran as the Socialist Party USA candidate from Ohio for the US Senate. In 2011, when Occupy Wall Street appeared, I joined the Occupy movement in Cincinnati.

Capitalism has grown more powerful (if more crisis ridden) during my lifetime, but Stalinism, in both its remaining state systems and in various political parties in many countries, remains a threat to the future of democratic socialism. The third-camp political principles of opposition to capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism, the understanding of the centrality of the idea of democracy, and the potential of a revolutionary transformation to a democratic socialist society remain central to my life and action.

Dan La Botz is an American labour movement activist, journalist and writer. He is a member of the Solidarity group. This is an unabridged version can be read online at tinyurl.com/labotzpiece

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[The Treason of the Intellectuals, and other political verse] by Sean Matgamna

A collection including items previously published in Solidarity and forerunner publications over the last 25 years.


All proceeds go to the AWL fundraising drive
As class struggle receded, financial problems worsened. Most individual contributors came from working-class people, responding to Lansbury's call-outs for money. An example was the Herald League, founded to popularise the paper and raise funds. It developed into a political network which many syndicalists and trade unionists joined during the Great Strike.

The Daily Herald front page of 1919, criticising the government for economic sanctions on Austria in pursuit of war reparations

Daily Herald front page of 1919, criticising the government for economic sanctions on Austria in pursuit of war reparations
The Spanish Revolution was the last great confrontation in the Europe-wide class war sparked by the triumphant Russian revolution of 1917. It inspired workers from all over the world and its tragic defeat was a source of controversy for decades after the events. The debates between the Spanish left, Leon Trotsky, other "Trotskyists" and writers such as Victor Serge are worth revisiting. They highlight important lessons about Marxian organisation.

The debates of Trotsky and others centered on assessments of the different political tendencies on the Spanish revolutionary movement: the anarchists, the reformist socialists and the communists.

Until the period following the First World War, the Spanish labour movement was relatively weak. Although anarchist thought had deep roots in Spain by the turn of the twentieth century it was fighting against the weight of seventeenth-century repression.

After a failed general strike in 1902, union membership in Barcelona fell from 45,000 to just 7,000 by 1899. The anarchist-syndicalist Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) was formed in 1910, shaped by working-class class action on the street following the massacre of an anti-colonialist rebellion in Catalonia in 1909. But initially it was small, with no more than 10,000 members.

Spain's neutrality in the First World War reaped substantial war profits for Spanish capitalism, causing a boom and a subsequent slump. The anarchists who reaped the whirlwind, attracting the most militant workers with promises of immediate and direct action, were soon expelled by a reformist-led federation from the street following the massacre of an anti-colonialist rebellion in Catalonia in 1909. But initially it was small, with no more than 10,000 members.

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The fortunes of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and the socialiste-led union federation, the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), offer a stark contrast. Spanish social democracy had long flinched from action which would bring it into conflict with the state. For instance, the Madrid-based PSOE-UGT leadership, led by the moderate reformist Pablo Iglesias, had opposed turning an important miners' strike of 1913 (Rio Tinto) into a general strike and ceded much ground to the new CNT in Catalonia. The party's combination of revolutionary rhetoric and conciliatory actions could not even be explained by a desire — like that of the German Social Democratic Party leaders — to preserve a large and powerful party apparatus at all costs.

The PSOE was weak, registering only 45,000 votes in 1910. Spanish social democracy had always been more ideologically weak — it did not take part in any of the controversies over political strategy within the socialist Second International at the turn of the century. It made few attempts to relate Marxist theory to Spanish realities, and it lacked theoretical leadership. Julian Besteiro, a former liberal republican and Professor of Logic in the Universidad Central de Madrid, was an extreme example of "vulgar Marxist" dogmatism. Besteiro's analysis of Spain was highly deterministic: he thought that the country was in a semi-feudal condition; that the Second Spanish Republic declared in April 1931 represented a stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; and that PSOE should step aside and allow the liberal republicans to govern alone. He advocated abstentionism from the 1930 Pact of San Sebastián (a coalition of republican and royalist parties) and declared a republic.

The revolutionary general strike of August 1917, vividly captured in Victor Serge's semi-autobiographical novel Birth of Our Power, had been the beginning of a wave of militant class struggle which ended in defeat for the workers and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in 1922. Primo's dictatorship was a cold winter for the working-class movement. The anarchist movement was outlawed, and driven underground, precipitating a split in 1927 between the more moderate and syndicalist wing around Angel Pestana, and the more ideologically pure anarchists such as Buenaventura Durruti who formed the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI).

At the same time the PSOE split over the whether or not to adhere to "Twenty One Conditions" for membership of the new, Third International, set up after the Russian Revolution. The left-wing left to form the Spanish Communist Party (FCE). The remaining leadership of PSOE began to collaborate with Primo de Rivera, and the trade union bureaucrats Francisco Largo Caballero even joined the dictator's Council of Ministers in return for the UGT being allowed to take part in state arbitration committees designted to mitigate industrial disputes. The FCE's stance only changed when living standards began to decline in the second half of the 1920s.

After the 1931 elections the PSOE became the largest party in the Cortes. Against the wishes of Besteiro and others, it decided to share power with the Spanish republicans and the centre-right Radicals. Largo Caballero became the Minister of Labour, charged with tackling the problem of the highly inefficient Spanish agriculture, characterised by starvation wages and seasonal unemployment. Caballero's mild-1932 Agrarian Reform Law created a Land Registry, and laid the basis for the compulsory purchase of large estates. The Law of Municipal Boundaries hindered landowners' ability to import labour from one municipality to another in order to depress wages in times of regional unemployment.

The agrarian question was at the centre of left-right political polarisation during the Second Spanish Republic. Agrarian reforms met stubborn resistance from landowners because they cut into already low profit rates. They were often delayed by unsympathetic officials on the ground. The right mobilised pious Catholic smallholders against the apparent threat to private property.

Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), founded in 1935

In December 1933, the right came to power in Navarre, promising to halt progress on the agrarian question; they initiated harsh repression against the working-class. Stalled and obstructed on land reform, sections of the POUM shifted to the left. The Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra (FNTT), the agricultural section of the UGT, grew rapidly. Founded in April 1930, it had 275 sections, 36,639 members two months later. Two years later it had 392,953 members and made up 38% of UGT membership. The UGT has been transformed from a union of skilled craftsmen to one with a large base of landless labourers.

Alert to rank-and-file radicalisation, and knowing that the UGT needed to fend off a resurgent anarchist movement, Largo Caballero shifted to the left, adopting bellicose revolutionary rhetoric. After 1935, when the Spanish Stalinists adopted the Comintern's popular front policy of allying with reformist socialists and bourgeois democrats, they crowned Caballero the "Spanish Lenin". A left tendency around Luis Araquistain in the POUM emerged.

Araquistain had worked with Caballero on the land question before becoming Spain's ambassador to Germany. With Hitler in power (after 1933) Araquistain helped evacuate Jews and refugees from certain death.

Araquistain's journal Lezain (founded May 1934) became a vehicle for relentless ideological attacks on Besteiro. The journal contained articles by Italian, German, Austrian and Portuguese socialists in exile and gave space to Leon Trotsky's analysis of fascism.

Arguments about the bankruptcy of the Comintern's popular front strategy also found a voice in Lezain through contributions from the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (BGC), led by Joaquin Maurin, and Izquierda Comunista Española (ICE), led by Andrés Nin. Maurin and Nin founded the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) in 1935.

Maurin developed the idea of working-class united fronts called Alianzas Obreras (Workers' Alliances). Such projects did get off the ground and were to play a role in the October 1934 rising in Asturias. However the POUM would be mainly interested in using them to promote their own hegemony in the workers' movement and, with the exception of Asturias, the CNT remained aloof.

The ICE was the Spanish Section of the Left Opposition. Formed originally as the Oposición Comunista Española (OCE) by a group of Spanish exiles in Belgium on 28 February 1930, it was eventually led by Nin.

Nin was an experienced revolutionary. As secretary of the national committee of the CNT, he had travelled to Moscow in 1921 for the founding conference of the Prointern, the international organisation to co-ordinate communist trade union work. In Moscow he first met Victor Serge and the French syndicalist leader Alfred Rosmer. Unable to return to Spain until 1931 because he was wrongly linked to the murder of the Spanish prime minister Eduardo Dato, he resolved to stay in Moscow to assist the work of the Prointern. He became an ally of Leon Trotsky, joining the Left
and some other minor Catalan leftist parties to discuss the Comintern's pursuit of attacking social democrats such as Nin and Victor Serge, and in the Internal Bulletin of tumbling in line with the internal struggles of the other sections, and thereby have that off into access from an irreparable international experience.

Second, Trotsky questioned Nin's relationship with Mau- rin and his followers. In September 1931 Trotsky had written to Maurín's BOC on the grounds that the Opposition interna- tionally had not yet given up on reforming the existing offi- cial Communist Parties. In December 1932 Trotsky held an informal meeting in Copenhagen with several sections of the Opposition in Spain, but Maurín's BOC decided against attending. In Trotsky's view, the effects of the Comintern's purge purged by the Stalinists and the government of the left-wing PSOE, pri- mer Juan Negrín after May 1937, many Bolshevik-Leninists disappeared, including Erwin Wolf, who was the secretary to Trotsky during his exile, and Hans Freund (alias Mussolini). After the arrest of Munís in 1938, Miesczkow Bortkene, a member of the French International Workers Party (POI) was arrested. The Spanish Trotskyists. He served in the CNT militia from the beginning of the Civil War, and helped to edit La Voz, a newspaper for the Spanish Trotskyists. In the summer of 1936, although he admitted it contained some serious errors, Trotsky never underestimated the individual tactics of the POUM. This group published El Soviet and was very critical of the POUM. This group published El Soviet and was very critical of the POUM's political programme and its radical programme.
**REPORTS**

**Nottingham teachers fight five-term year plan**

By Tom Untermaier, President, Nottingham City NUT (pc)

Nottingham teachers struck for a second day on 17 March in their campaign of industrial action against the Local Authority.

Inspired by Michael Gove’s plans to change school holiday patterns, the Labour-controlled council has attempted to force through a change to a five-term year in Nottingham city schools. Implementation of the five term year will mean a shortening of the six week summer holiday to four weeks and a regular pattern of eight week terms.

Members of all teaching unions controlling a majority of head teachers in the city — and the body representing school governor-nesses have rejected the plan. Nottingham City National Union of Teachers balloted its members for a strike action after an overwhelming response from ordinary teachers. NAUSWT and other school based unions are yet to act, although there are some signs that they could join action short.

The NUT’s opposition and the subsequent industrial action are not simply a response to the shortening of the summer holiday. The union does argue that a five-term year plan is not necessary for both teachers and young people. Necessary for teachers because they need time to recover and recuperate from an emotionally, intellectually and physically exhausting academic year. Necessary for young people for exactly the same reason. Additionally, the NUT argues that young people need timetable freedom away from school, time to play, time to interact with others in a non-academic setting and time to learn and experience the things that school cannot teach.

If Nottingham Labour councillors succeed in changing to a four week summer break, young people in the city will have the shortest summer break in the world bar South Korea. South Korea has the highest recorded child suicide rate in the world.

**DIRECT**

In addition, the change would affect schools under direct control of the city council.

This means the majority of secondary schools — Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Academy schools would retain a different holiday pattern to the majority of city primaries. Additionally, schools in the county, some of them across the road from neighbouring city schools, will retain the traditional holiday patterns. This in turn means that brothers and sisters attending different schools could have completely different holiday patterns. Not only that, but teachers who happen to be parents could end up seeing very little of their children!

Despite significant pressure from the local press, the unions and parents’ pressure from the local community, Nottingham city council has so far refused to budge. Councilors and local education officials seem determined to go it alone, using Gove’s Tory propaganda tool to whack teachers, and their families over the head. The NUT has a third of industrial action planned and may well take further action in the short term.

The fight not just for teachers but for the well-being, mental and physical health of the young people they teach.

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**Tanker drivers’ ballot extended as talks continue**

By Darren Bedford

Unite officials and fuel industry bosses have negotiated a deal to extend the legal validity of a tanker drivers’ strike ballot until Friday 20 April as talks continue.

Peter Harwood, “Chief Conciliator” at arbitration service ACAS, has told the press that “the intention is that no industrial action will be called in that period”. The period in which Unite would have had to announce industrial action in order to keep the ballot live was due to expire at 4pm on Monday 16 April.

Under the new agreement tanker drivers could call a strike any time from 21 April to 27 April (they are required to give at least seven days notice). Drivers are fighting to impose minimum standards on safety, pay, terms and conditions across an industry fragmented by subcontracting and outsourcing. Haulage and fuel company bosses have scoffed at their demands, claiming that they are equivalent to asking Tesco, Sainsbury’s and Asda to guarantee across the board minimum standards for their check-out staff (an eminently sensible demand that the labour movement should fight for when it becomes better organised in the supermarket retail sector).

Representatives of the management of six of the seven companies involved in the dispute have attended talks.

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**First BMV Strike in 28 years looming**

By Stewart Ward

Workers at BMW’s Oxford plant have voted by 97% to oppose management’s latest pay offer.

The consultative ballot, which was conducted by the Unite union, polled 2,000 employees.

The pay deal included a basic increase of 2.21%, of which nearly 2% was contingent on working extra hours. Since the ballot, BMW bosses have offered further deals. While “welcoming” the talks, Unite has said it will press on with plans to move to a full ballot for industrial action to win a better deal.

Unite officer Roger Maddison said: “There are more strings to this deal than a puppet show and the workers at BMW will not accept it.”

“Most of the workforce works 11 hour shifts, and more and more productivity demands are being made by BMW. The union never closed the door on talks and we are happy to get back around the table but we are also making preparations to ballot our members for strike action.”

If strike action was to take place, it would be the first at the plant since 1984.

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**Unilever pension fight ends in “bitter disappointment”**

By Clarke Benitez

Members of Unite and USDAW at Unilever have accepted a new pension offer from bosses, with members of the GMB currently balloting.

If the deal is accepted it would end the long-running battle over the closure of the company’s final salary pension scheme which saw Unilever workers take unprecedented industrial action.

The new deal does not reverse the closure but what Unite claims are “significant improvements” to the new career average scheme which will replace the existing final-salary scheme. The deal also commits Unilever to not making any further changes to the pension scheme until 2018, and that any future changes must be subjected to full prior consultation with trade unions before being announced.

Unite describes the reprieve as a mitigated defeat for workers.

USDAL official David Johnson said: “While we have achieved some important improvements to the replacement scheme, our members remain angry and bitterly disappointed by Unilever’s decision to close the final-salary pension scheme.”

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**Bullying investigation at Swindon hospital**

By a GMB activist

An enquiry into endemic bullying and harassment of workers at a hospital in Swindon, which has led so far to 16 days of strike action — is set to conclude on 27 April.

Over 100 workers employed by Carillion as auxiliary staff at Swindon Hospital have been interviewed as part of the investigation, which was one of the strike demands of the workers union, the GMB.

The GMB has said that if the investigation does not result in satisfactory measures for dealing with and preventing future management bullying, further strike action is likely.

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**Mobilise to reject the deal!**

By a healthworker

NHS members of public sector union Unison are currently voting on whether to accept the government’s deal of re-forming their pension scheme.

Despite the 30 Novem-ber strike action, the deal remains a “work longer, pay more, get less” out-
formally coming into force

the arrival of the first UN

truce has collapsed already.

By Dan Katz

of losing Russian and

Chinese backing, the

on Thursday 13 April and

gions, there is an uneasy

fire plan.

What is capitalism,

and can it last?

ans? Michael Chessum, NUS national executive, de -

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