They are to blame for the double-dip!

TORIES • BOSSES
• BANKERS

Fight for a workers’ government and European unity 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 structured so the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, and the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalist class, 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 also actively among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to tax the rich to fund decent public services, homes, and small.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the working class.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- 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 white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere in union with each other 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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By Martin Hudson

THOSE comrades who live near the poshest millionnaire-ville aires at Wimmington Close, Hampstead, may have noticed the removal vans over the last few days shipping off the Pi- cassos and the Chaggals from number 71. This pad, worth about £10 million, was the British residence of the erstwhile Saadi Qadaffi, now hiding out in exile in Niger. It is in the process of confiscation as part of criminal assets by the National Treasury Council in Libya. Saadi Qadaffi is disputing their claim — although he may be stretching it a bit if he thinks a lamp post will again one day be the back-drop to his playboy antics.

Pre-Qadaffi forces within Libya itself have been physically destroyed, exiled to the south of the country, or keeping a very quiet profile in the face of attacks by militias who have still not been brought back under control by gov- ernment forces and who are themselves deeply sus- picious of the anti-federalist, anti-triqlie regime.

Sokri Chahen, who was head of the Na- tional Oil Corporation under the old regime, was found dead last Sunday in the river Danube in Vienna when a body was fished in the closing days of the regime — ostensibly because of Qadaffi's brutal crackdown but probably in reality be- cause he knew which way the wind was blowing. His death signifies the mark- alisation of the personnel of the old regime and the total hostility of the NTC to ac- cepting those who didn't jump ship quick enough into the government. Revelations about the close ties between the old regime and the old regime have re surfaced in recent weeks particularly the NTC giving details of dissidents, resident in Britain, to Qadaffi's secu rity services. It's also clear that naval forces (Euro- pean, US or UK) left 72 African migrants to their fate off the coast of Libya in the early days of the up risings only 31 were rescued, only to be returned back to Libya itself. The NTC is struggling with the militia question and in early April there were significant workers' and women's protests against the rule of the mili tias in Libyan towns and cities. The government has not bowed to some of the triqlists and aristocratic demands of the militias.

The NTC is also wary of the total of the Islamic parties, which the National Transitional Council in Libya which has now founded its own "Freedom and Develop ment" party to stand in the forthcoming general elections, which will write and deliver the new Libyan constitution. The NTC has issued a statement against any political parties, which the militias have taken as an the other sign that the govern ment is losing patience with them.

The early statements on religious freedom from the Democratic Party of Libya clearly point to a hostility towards the Islamists on behalf of the new Libyan liberal democracy — par ticularly their idea that the measure of the success of Libyan democracy is the re turn of the longstanding Libyan Jewish population to Benghazi and Tripoli after their expulsion by the old regime.

The general elections in two months' time will be critical for what kinds of const itution and im mediate political settle ments will pave the way for the workers' and women's organisation in the country, and how far the political gains already won can be defended against an assertive and educated Islamic movement in North in Africa.

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Dave Spencer, 1940-2012

By Martin Thomas

Dave Spencer died on 24 April 2012, at the age of 71.

He was one of the very first people to join the Workers' Fight group, former runner of the AWL, when it "went public" in the British labour move ment in October 1960.

Before that Workers' Fight, a tiny group formed in a faction fight within the Militant group, had put all its publications for in working on Work ers' Fight, the theoretical magazine of the former Workers' Group, hoping to help consolidate the IS, as a Trotskyist organisation.

Like many of the early Workers' Fight members, Dave had first (from about 1960), I think, been active in the Socialist Labour League (SLL), led by Gerry Healy. The SLL was then, and would be until the early 70's, the mainstay of the revolutionary socialist groups.

In 1967 it was lurching through sectarianism to craziness; from 1968 it would sell itself to Arab despots in order to sustain its daily paper, and then in 1985 it would explode, leaving almost no trace today.

Most ex-Healyites were deeply marked by the in tense activism and sect regime of the SLL. Dave was less so. He was matter-of-fact, commonsensical, affable, where Healyites were ostenta tiously "theoretical" and austere.

Dave would debunk the Healyites' ballyhoo about their "theory" in the hyper-active SLL, He would say, "theory" was what you did in the bus on the way to "practice". He would recount how Healy had told him to "get rid of" his wife Margaret, a devout Catholic. Dave had no qualms about re turning to her, and what was interesting was he had many qualms about retiring as a Trotskyist from the way to "practice". He would recount how Healy had told him to "get rid of" his wife Margaret, a devout Catholic. Dave had no qualms about re turning to her, and what was interesting was he had many qualms about retiring as a Trotskyist from Healyites, which developed, Dave took up a unity call from the Workers' Fight organiser in the city. The fusion we nt bad, in 1968 Workers' Fight took up a unity call from IS (forerunner of the SWP), and became until late 1971 a "tendency" within IS. In most of the few areas where there were W fight members, by late 1969 IS was anathematising and ghettoising them.

Dave, in Coventry, re mained unmaligned even though he was a mi nority of one in the local IS. In part, I guess, that was because the majority saw him as no threat; in part, it was Dave's way.

BELIEVED

In debate he was good-humoured, and even when you disagreed entirely with him, you thought he really believed what he was saying.

He wasn't striking a pose defending an inter est, or seeking prestige. In the first years after W fight collapsed from IS in December 1971, Dave was something of a one-person minority arguing for us to turn more to the Labour Party, (he was especially vocal against him, and I was wrong).

Dave was well-known and well-respected in the Coventry labour move ment, well as being for many years the Workers' Fight organiser in the city.

The fusion would bad, in part because the WSL had more demoralised than we had thought at the time of fusion, and disagreed with the fusion organisa tion, as we ll as being for unity, and building-from below may produce para doxical results. He helped through collaboration with or membership of a bewildering splinter groups (BSG, SLP, BSA, CCPB, CM, Com mune, and I don't know what else), and an endless series of storms-in-a-teacup faction fights.

In the 1980's sometimes, I visited Dave in Coventry and he described how he'd found the SLL intolerable. He was a sociable, friendly and it looked like we might re-establish dial ogue or even collabora tion. It didn't happen. I was critical for what kinds of const itution and im mediate political settle ments will pave the way for the workers' and women's organisation in the country, and how far the political gains already won can be defended against an assertive and educated Islamic movement in North in Africa.

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**Expelling London’s poor**

**ByClarkeBenitez**

The local council of Newham, east London’s biggest council, has written to a housing association asking them to evict council tenants who are also patients at Newham University Hospital.

The hospitals trust, Newham University Hospital NHS Trust, has written to the St Michael’s Housing Association asking them to help the trust “reclaim” the “occupation of our hospital from illegal tenants”.

The hospital trust’s statement claims that it is “not possible to guarantee time critical treatment, whilst the NHS faces a severe funding crisis.”

The housing association has yet to respond to the eviction letter.

**Profliteers bleeding the NHS dry**

**By Todd Haber**

Last Tuesday, private health giants Capita and UnitedHealthcare introduced themselves to London’s leading GPs with a Cowley Lecture as matchmaker.

With the sinister language of a self-help book, the multinationals claimed the NHS was an lean engine and signed to ensure that Clinical Commissioning Groups are fully empowered and literate in the art of profit making.

In fact, this was a shallow low marketing exercise designed to woo the new masters of NHS into handing over large amounts of public money.

The cuts, failure of the Health and Social Care Act and privateers will be the new employers who make huge profits at the expense of patients and healthworkers.

**VIRGIN SUCCESS**

It is estimated that since the Health and Social Care Act became law, Richard Branson’s Virgin Care has won over £1 billion of contracts.

The biggest contract is in continuing care services in Surrey, but Virgin have also won contracts in Milton Keynes and Brighton and West Sussex.

Research by Eoin Clarke (Green Benches blog) shows that employees of Branson sat on the Clinical Commissioning Groups that awarded the contracts. Branson has been allowed to position itself in certain areas so as not to have a clashing of purse-strings and has then awarded contracts to itself. So far the strategy seems to have been successful.

**Left victories at student conference**

By AWL students

This year’s National Students Union Conference (24-26 April, Sheffield) saw left-wing student activist groups, most notably the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, defeat the NUS (Labour-led) leadership on a range of issues.

The conference voted, against the leadership’s imperialist opposition, for “the abolition of all fees; no hidden course costs, a living grant/maintenance allowance... stop the cuts... tax the rich and business” and for a national walk out of college/ university students the autumn term.

It voted to campaign against the government’s whole Higher Education agenda, including all privatisation, fees, and partial-union expulsion of students by the government.

It voted against “theavadable advantage of students, meaning up support for the anti-capitalist union drive and on defending the right to protest, including resistance to police violence.”

The conference voted to reaffirm to United Front Against Fascism, against our opposition. A more radical position on anti-fascist groups from NUS-Campaigners, was not adopted.

The conference saw an act of anti-semitic vandalism against the stall of the Union of Jewish Students. The stars of David on the UPF’s stall were plastered over with “boycott Israel” stickers. The issue here is not one’s view on boycotting Israel per se, but the targeting of Jewish students — and the poisonous atmosphere which “left-wing” agitation on the question of Israel-Palestine has helped to create.

Left candidate Vicki Baar, who is currently one of NUS’s LGBT officers, won the position VP Union Development. This is the first time the left has won one of the VP positions over a decade.

Other left candidates got substantial votes, but did not come near winning.

The NCAF stood three candidates for the part-time “Block of 15” section of the executive. The ballots will be out on 3 May.

They were met by pro-choice protests. In Sheffield SPUC numbered around twenty. We won 30 or more. The vigil was next to the abortion clinic, so was very busy with traffic. The vast majority of the support was for us, of lots of cars honking, smiles and wolves. There was a peaceful atmosphere all day.

The Liverpool SPUC event was attended by about 20 anti-abortionists and 30 pro-choice activists. North West Indels had said they would turn up but they didn’t. The demonstration was held outside a church by a busy roadside in Childwall. The counter protest was lively and we effectively stopped their placards being seen by covering them. We won.

We came up with chants raising the positive demands necessary for a woman’s right to choose, which really put the pro-life on the defensive.

Our demo was on the whole very young and mainly anarchivist with a few unionists present.

**UNISON leader calls for TUC demo**

On 25 April Unison general secretary Dave Prentis called on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to organise a national demonstration in autumn 2012.

The demonstration, say UNISON leaders, would be to tackle another collaboration between the government and employers on policies including public spending cuts, heavy job losses, damaging privatisation and the unfair pay freeze.

“We need the TUC to organise the biggest demonstration in our Labour movement’s history. Today I am calling on the TUC to set plans in motion to show the government that there is real popular anger.”

The call for a demonstration must include ditching plans to cut taxes for the rich in society, which those on low incomes and communities all across the country pay a heavy price for.

The call for the demonstration is a warning to all employers that the far-right bandwagon is not going to work.

**Confront the EDL in London**

**By Padraig O’Brien**

Anti-fascists will mobilise in London on Saturday 28 April when the English Defence League prepare to demonstrate in what many EDL supporters see as their organisation’s spiritual home.

Although the far-right ‘March Against paganism’ was routed by anti-fascists in Brighton on Sunday 22 April, the EDL remains sufficiently confident to physically attack left-wing activists, including recently hospitalising two people after attacking an SWP-run stall in Lewisham, south east London.

The new alliance between the EDL and the British Freedom Party in late 2011 split from the BNP is designed to boost the EDL, adding the potential for a new far right political force.

The 6.5 million votes garnered by French fascist Marine Le Pen in the first round of France’s recent presidential elections, and the ongoing popularity of Geert Wilder’s ‘Party for Freedom’ to the government, the demonstration was next to the EDL’s restaurant in the Netherlands, could further bolster fascist confidence in Britain.

The Lucan anti-fascist mobilisation will take place in parallel to the EDL’s demonstration on Saturday 5 May, which will be kettleed by police.

That is not good enough: Anti-fascists need to organise to stop the EDL from marching or at least disrupt their plans, as anti-fascists did in Brighton.

Physically confronting the EDL does not necessarily mean pitched street fights, but it does mean using creative tactics — including blocking roadways to prevent fascist mobilisation.

• For details of the UAF meeting see bit.ly/Hqk4pm

Unison leader calls for TUC demo

Organising against anti-choice bigotry

On 28 April the Society for Protection of the Unborn Child organised a series of ‘right-to-life’ demonstrations against abortion, in towns across the UK.

Gerry Bates

** bit.ly/4Am9F5**
Eric Lee

The week leading up to May Day is commemorated each year around the world as “North Korea Freedom Week”, though you’d hardly know that if you were active in the British labour movement.

British unions pride themselves on their solidarity campaigns in support of workers in Palestine, Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba, but never speak out in defence of those workers who live in North Korea, a country that is effectively a giant prison.

This year, there was a commemoration in the House of Commons and three North Korean refugees spoke, as well as someone from Amnesty International (AI). Several people commented on the fact that while public opinion can lead to pressure on a number of countries that violate human rights, there is very little ever done about North Korea in spite of its abysmal record.

This is particularly true in the labour movement. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) publishes an annual report on violations of trade union rights around the world. For some years, there’s a general description, a few words about the legal situation of workers, and a page about violations of rights. For a country such as Israel, the ITUC publishes a list of rights violations. But the page about North Korea is blank.

Following the same formula for all countries, the ITUC has this to say about North Korea:


One of the mechanisms unions can use on a global scale to combat violations of union rights is the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a UN body. The ILO has a committee on freedom of association which hears reports of such violations. In its most recent report, the committee mentions the “reality of ‘Korean’ workers numbering up to 38 times. But every single reference is to South Korea.

 Worse than this, some unions actually welcome representatives of the state-controlled North Korean unions as honour guest in their conferences. At the last conference of the French union federation, an executive from the North Korean Chamber of Commerce spoke.

And they should start that campaign right now.

LabourStart on North Korea: http://nl.labourstart.org

Eric Lee

South Korea: why are unions silent?

In an email dated 12 February last year Frederic Michel (a FRFI activist for Murdoch Jr) told his boss: “I met with Salmond’s adviser today. He (Salmond) will call Hunt (the Scottish version of the British PM) this week.”

On 1 March 2011, Salmond had dinner with the editor of the Scottish version of the Sun. The Sun pledged to support the SNP in the Holyrood elections taking place in two months time.

The following day Salmond phoned Michel and asked if he could ensure that Murdoch Jr could “smooth the way” for the SNP to come out in support of the SNP. Michel emailed Murdoch Jr: “Alex Salmond called... the Sun is now very keen to back the SNP and was wanted to find out whether we could help smooth the way for the process.”

Salmond, the email continued, wanted to host Murdoch Jr and Michel for dinner some time before the launch of the election campaign in late March. The email concluded: “On the phone, he (Salmond) will make himself available to support the debate if consultation goes ahead.”

On 3 March, Salmond duly booked a call with Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt so that he could argue in support of News International (NI’s) bid to take over BSkyB. (The call did not take place, as Hunt announced the same day that he would allocate the takeover.)

Salmond has not denied the above sequence of events, but he has denied a formal trade-off. We’re meant to believe that it was all just a coincidence!

In a debate in Holyrood last week Salmond claimed that there was absolutely no issue at all with the BSkyB bid.

South African unions invited the nearly-defunct “World Federation of Trade Unions” (WFTU) to hold a high profile meeting in their country. During the Cold War, WFTU was the home for Stalinist unions but in recent years is host more to anti-capitalist dictatorships and the Romanian-Cuban-Syrian regimes. Heads of the North Korean unions spoke at the WFTU event and at South African union conferences. There were reports of them being meeting with the Japanese embassy, of them being disinvited.

The official union in the public sector union NEHAWU (a sister union to UNIon) proudly lists “international solidarity” as one of its six core principles. And yet they invite representatives of the North Korean regime to speak at their congress, and publish their speeches on the NEHAWU website.

That argument may be made that the reason why so little attention is paid to North Korean human rights is that there is so little information leaking out of the country. While it’s true that information about, say, violations of Palestinian human rights is ubiquitous, it is more difficult to find news about North Korea.

More difficult, but not impossible. LabourStart has just launched a news page, updated daily, which includes stories on workers in North Korea. Recent stories focus on the decision by the regime to export North Korean workers to China as cheap labour. Other stories from AI and the BBC report on the regime’s brutal treatment of those workers who try to form trade unions.

It turns out that there are plenty of sources of information about the terrible situation faced by working people in North Korea, a country in which an estimated 200,000 young people are put to work in slave conditions. Yet precisely because of causes such as a UN Human Rights Watch and many groups dedicated specifically to North Korea. There is no reason for trade unions to pretend ignorance anymore.

Workers throughout the world are up against brutal regimes, battling austerity budgets, anti-union campaigns by corporate bosses and politicians and barbaric human rights regimes.

But the British labour movement does not talk about North Korea.

Salmond, Murdoch — best of mates

Scotland

By Dale Street

SNP leader Alex Salmond’s best-of-pals relationship with Rupert Murdoch has been thrust into the limelight by the Leveson inquiry.

In an email dated 11 February last year Frederic Michel (a FRFI activist for Murdoch Jr) told his boss: “I met with Salmond’s adviser today. He (Salmond) will call Hunt (the Tory Culture Secretary) whenever we need him to.”

On 1 March 2011, Salmond had dinner with the editor of the Scottish version of the Sun. The Sun pledged to support the SNP in the Holyrood elections taking place in two months time.

The following day Salmond phoned Michel and asked if he could ensure that Murdoch Jr could “smooth the way” for the SNP in the Holyrood elections taking place in two months time. Then again, what we are facing right now is shaping up to be rather more serious.

Fixing the situation does not work, even by its own lights.

Sometimes it really has been from the local central bank suggest that Greek GDP will fall 5% in 2012, marking a crucial drop of 13% since 2008, it remains true that the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 was far worse, GDP plunged 13% in Indonesia in 1998 alone, with reductions of 11% in Thailand and 7% in South Korea and Malaysia.

Yet Asia recovered relatively rapidly, and the official line from the European Central Bank (ECB) is that Greece will see stagnation next year, followed by the resumption of growth in 2014. The Greek government sharp reductions in wages and public spending, collapsing consumer confidence, capital flight, an investment strike and — most important of all — the absence of export-oriented manufacturing industries, many observers regard that outcome as unlikely.

Moreover, the consequences of all this, broadly between those who attribute export-oriented manufacturing industries, many observers regard that outcome as unlikely.

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Sometime before being self-regulating, in the context of the political intervention that has maintained for the last three decades, capitalism is utterly dependent on state intervention for its survival.

The clearest recent demonstration of this is the so-called long-term refinancing operation mounted by the ECB, which pumped one trillion euros worth of ultra-cheap three year loans into the European banking system. Despite the name, the measure is likely to prove only a short-term fix.

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Osborne is to blame!

If there is high unemployment, and little buying power for goods and services, then government cuts raise unemployment higher, cut buying power further, and thus snowball a slump.

And yes, that is what has happened with George Osborne's economic policies. Statistics now show a decline in output for two quarters (six months) in a row, which is the rule-of-thumb definition of a recession. Real life shows continuous high unemployment, at best levelling off, and steadily dropping real wages.

In the Great Depression of the 1930s, there was a quicker recovery. By 1934, four years after the slump of 1930, economic activity had recovered and risen above its 1930 level. In this depression, output is still way below 2008 levels, and most of Osborne's cuts are yet to come.

Labour shadow chancellor Ed Balls is right to say that the Tories' 'austerity plan is self-defeating and cutting spending and raising taxes too far and too fast would badly backfire'.

He is also right that "far from the eurozone being to blame for Britain's woes, it was only growth in the EU and the rest of the world which kept us from going into recession earlier. Excluding exports, the domestic UK economy has now been in recession for a year".

LACKING

Despite the calamities in Greece, Spain, and other countries, in aggregate the eurozone and EU economies have been doing not as badly as Britain.

In 2011 EU output rose by 1.5%, eurozone output by the same figure, US output by 1.7% — and UK output by 0.7%.

British capital has had modestly expanding export markets, all the more so because it has a bigger proportion of its exports going to the slightly-less-sluggish USA than do other European countries. The recession in spending within Britain, and output for sale within Britain, has been even bigger than the overall recession.

Lacking from Ed Balls, and Ed Miliband in his "five priorities for the Queen's Speech" (30 April), however, has been any real alternative to Osborne. Miliband denounced the Tory/Lib-Dem government as "too close to the rich and powerful, out of touch with everyone else". But his own proposals were piffling:

- restoring the 50% top tax rate, reversing the cuts in tax credit;
- pressure on the utility companies to restrain electricity and gas prices;
- a limit on train fare increases;
- stronger public restraint on rip-off surcharges by banks, airlines, etc.;
- money from a tax on bank bonuses into a youth job scheme.

Nothing about reversing the cuts in the NHS (now running at 4% a year) or in schools (10,000 teachers' jobs lost last year). Nothing about funding so that local councils re-verse their cuts in jobs and services;

Nothing about a concerted effort to tax the rich, or to establish public and democratic control over the banks and high finance.

Osborne's argument is that social spending cuts reassure global financial markets, so enable the British government to borrow at continuously low interest rates, and so enable private capitalist business to borrow and expand without being "crowded out".

It rings hollow, for a start, because bank lending to business is still way down. But the real reason for Osborne's cuts drive is not the same as the official "good reason".

Cutting social spending and using high unemployment as a lever to worsen workers' wages and conditions or even to crush union organisation may lengthen a recession — but it makes sense for the rich because it sets the conditions for a capitalist recovery, later, to start with low costs, high profits, and stricter control over Labour.

Alan Budd, who was an economic adviser to Tony prime minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, recently summarised the guideline for Tory policy in the 1980s: 'raising unemployment was an extremely desirable way of reducing the strength of the working classes — if you like, that what was engineered there in Marxist terms was a crisis of capitalism which re-created a reserve army of labour and has allowed the capitalists to make high profits ever since'.

Osborne's is the same policy now.

Help the AWL raise £20,000!

The Sunday Times Life in the Day feature invites their readers to enter the world of brave, talented and otherwise interesting people. Petra Ecclestone, the heiress daughter of the Formula One boss, who featured on 29 April, did not qualify on any of those counts.

She thought she had been very brave to withstand people being mean to her at school. Maybe that meanness had something to do with Petra's complete lack of self-awareness.

She blathered on with the iron sense of entitlement that only the very, very, very rich possess. How her chef pours her Alpen every morning and her butler serves it up.

If she had been more modest. We would make do with the equivalent budget Petra has for "popping to the shops" — on Rodeo Drive. We promise to spend it much more wisely.

If you think you can help us please do:

- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post us to the AWL address below.
- Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate
- Organising a fundraising event
- Taking copies of Solidarity to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

More information: (07799) 604604

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A wealth tax could cancel the cuts

Just one thousand wealthy people in Britain increased their wealth by £19 billion between 2010 and 2011. If that extra loot were taken from them in tax — leaving them still richer — then only more super-rich than in 2010 — that alone would yield enough revenue to off-set all the Cameron government's benefit cuts.

If the bulk of their wealth were expropriated — leaving them merely rich, with £1 million each — that would pay off about half Britain's total government debt, leaving the country with no "government debt problem" at all even from the viewpoint of the most conservative economist.

The top thousand suffered losses between 2008 and 2009, as the rich obviously do when businesses go bust and shares and property prices fall: but now they have recouped all those losses, and more.

Real wages are still falling. By June 2011, they were on average down 7.4%. And the "social wage" of benefits, pensions, and public services is falling too.

Apologists used to excuse inequality by saying that it encourages enterprise which lifts everyone's prosperity, and so long as the majority advance it is just previsions to complain about the extra rewards for a few.

Studies like the book by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, The Spirit Level, show the apologists are wrong even in their own terms. More unequal societies generate more illness, worse education, more crime, even if on average they may provide more cars or more flat-screen TVs.

Now the apologists' excuse falls down completely. The richer are getting richer while average standards are getting worse, and set to get worse for many years to come.

This can be changed only by a working-class fight-back.
EUROPE

The labour movement can and must push back the Tory government on individual policies. To do more than damage-limitation, however, the labour movement needs to drive this government from office.

As a summarising “bridge” demand, knitting together the others and making them coherent, Trotsky proposed: “Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers...and speak in their name that demand they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers’ government...” At the same time we agitate for the working-class demands which require a responsive government to carry them out.

In Britain today the “workers’ government” means a system of demands aimed at the labour movement:

- Calling for a workers’ government of a very limited and stopped-short form, and saw that Labour administration as a relatively smooth and uneventful period in the history of the Labour Party. Workers’ Liberty can use agitation for a workers’ government to strengthen the Labour Party and to build towards the revolutionary party.

Q. How is a “workers’ government” different from a reforming Labour government of the 1945 type?

In Britain, a workers’ government would probably, in the first place, be a reforming Labour government of a sort — that is, a Labour government based on a revitalised labour movement and mandated by it into radical pro-working-class measures.

But a reforming Labour government may be much less than a workers’ government; or (to put it another way) a workers’ government of a very limited and stopped-short variety.

The 1945 Labour government introduced reforms, and was much more accountable to the labour movement than recent Labour governments have been. And the Tories raged in Parliament against measures like the NHS. But most ruling-class strategists recognised that in the aftermath of World War II they had no choice but to concede reforms, and saw that Labour administration as a relatively “safe” though not ideal vehicle for that.

Q. How would a workers’ government come to power?

Would it need a revolution, or could a workers’ government be elected through the existing parliamentary system?

Genuine working-class revolutions are not explosions, dropping from the sky, or military operations concocted by a radical minority. They are the culmination of a process of self-awakening, self-education, self-mobilisation by the working class.

Especially in a country with strong parliamentary traditions like Britain, that process can well result in the election of a “Left Labour” government before a showdown over state power. In fact, it is unlikely that either the capitalist class or the working class will move the political struggle out of the parliamentary framework without that framework first being tested to the limit.

Onor a “Left Labour” government is elected, there will then be a battle over whether it becomes a real workers’ government — i.e. whether the labour movement is powerful enough to control it and enforce radical measures. If it does, the bourgeoisie will deploy its back-up resources — the obstructive powers of the House of Lords, the monarchy, and the courts; and, if the elected government defies those obstructed powers, then some sort of military coup.

In dull 2012, it seems fantasy to talk about a military coup in Britain. Yet we know, through subsequent admissions by army, Chief of Staff Michael Carver, that in February 1974, “fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it.”

In Australia, as “constitutional” a country as Britain, an only mildly-reforming Labour government was arbitrarily removed from office in November 1975 by the Queen’s representative, the Governor-General, using the unexplained powers of the monarchy. In other words, if a political struggle would, if the labour movement continued to mobilise, progressively burst out of the parliamentary framework. The Labour movement would build new organisations like workers’ militias and workers’ councils.

The future always turns out richer and more convoluted than we expect. We need to be writing to take a schedule of transitional developments from battles around a Left Labour parliamentary government as a dogma. But an instructive possibility?

Q. How is “workers’ government” different from “socialism”?

In strict Marxist terms, “socialism” is a stage of development a long time after a socialist revolution, achieved only when socialist development has got far enough to wash away all class conflicts and contrasts.

To counterpose “socialism” as “the answer” to the plight of capitalism is like saying that the answer to the perpetual chill of the Arctic is to move to a warmer climate, with-out saying how to get there. Not untrue, but not adequate.

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Q. Does a workers’ government require a revolution-ary party, or parties, or just a trade-union party?

Not just any labour movement can create a workers’ government. Only a mobilised, confident, democratic, and politically-sharp labour movement can do that.

And making the labour movement democratic and po-litically-sharp is not an automatic process. It requires the more politically-alarm, more revolutionarily-minded, more democratically-minded minority to organise, to organise effectively, to develop and redevelop clear ideas and policies, and to win serious influence. In that sense, a workers’ government is impossible without the emergence of at least a minority revolutionary party.

A small revolutionary socialist organisation like Workers’ Liberty can use agitation for a workers’ gov-ernment to help educate those around it, to win influ-ence, and to build towards the revolutionary party necessary to make workers’ government.

More: workersliberty.org/node/18782
Ande victory change economics?

No Keynesians in the Netherlands?

By Chris Reynolds

The Netherlands’ right-wing, neo-liberal, fiercely pro-cuts coalition government collapsed over the weekend of 21-22 April, unable to agree on measures to reduce the country’s budget deficit to the EU’s 3% target in 2013.

This collapse should, and must on some level, strengthen the hand of the labour movement in arguing against cuts.

The Financial Times (25 April) reports, however: “Anyone expecting the Netherlands to turn towards the anti-austerity prescriptions of neo-Keynesian economists in London and New York has another think coming.

“The idea that wealthy countries like the Netherlands, with its manageable national debt of 65.2% of GDP, should be running a big budget deficit to generate demand that could lead to growth in weaker eurozone economies, such as Spain, is nowhere to be found in the Dutch political landscape...

“Left-wing parties such as Labour and the Socialists oppose demands by the European Commission to bring the 2013 budget deficit below the EU limit of 3% of gross domestic product. They want to cut the budget deficit to some 1.8% per cent in 2013, and meet the 3 per cent target in 2015. Their proposals rely on tax hikes that would hit higher earners harder, measures that take longer to kick in...”

The FT seems to be right. The SP, a left social-democratic party of freakish Maoist origin, is possibly the strongest electoral party to the left of mainstream social democracy anywhere in Europe. In some recent opinion polls in the Netherlands, it has had more support than any other party, and in the latest polls it still scores as the second-strongest party, likely to win 20 seats in the proportion-representation parliament and thus marginally behind the right-wing VVD on 33.

Yet SP leader Emile Roemer declares: “I realise very well that we should bring the budget in order, but we should not cut too hard and too fast because that is disastrous for the economy and society.”

The roots of this stance must be partly, of course, the SP’s turn to parliamentary and electoralist “realism.”

Part of it also, probably, is a national narrowness of outlook which the SP shares with other left groups.

The SP has attitudes to Europe indicated by slogans like: “Netherlands wants less Brussels”. Thus, if the Netherlands can reduce its deficit without much pain, which maybe it can and it gives itself until 2015 to do it (and if no new international economic catastrophes intervene before that), why not?

The Euro-Keynesian argument is being rejected, not so much because it is limited and reformist and Keynesian, but because it is European, because it looks at the issues on an international scale.

Agitation by the Bild-Zeitung (German equivalent of the Sun): “Alle wollen unser Geld!” — “They all want our money!”

...there are only a few countries where they have any role in government.

...there are also divisions emerging on the political right, with the growth of populist and far-right, which also in a distorted way reflects this sense of failure of the system, has also opened up space.

In France, a section of the Parti Communiste vote went to the National Front, and maybe a section of it will be returning to the social democrats in the second round of the presidential election. That shows the instability of that vote.

The social democrats are coming back from a long time out of influence. The Social Democrats are back in office in Denmark, and there are signs of the political pendulum swinging in other countries, but not everywhere as yet.

If the Parti Socialiste is seen to be becoming the direction of the euro-area policy, in however restricted a sense, that will probably encourage other social democrats in other countries to join in.

In the Netherlands there has been a government crisis over budget cuts, ending with a new coalition for a cuts package. But no major party in the Netherlands has been ready to propose a “Euro-Keynesian” policy of deliberately continuing a deficit in a country like the Netherlands, which has a relatively mild debt problem.

The Dutch Socialist Party, the ex-Maoist party, has called for tax increases of various kinds, but they haven’t supported the reductions in course. The Labour Party, the PvdA, is not joining the new coalition government — not because it is against any cuts, but because it is against these cuts. But the scale of the cuts in the Netherlands is tiny compared to the scale of the cuts in Greece and Spain and Ireland so on.

The Green Left party in the Netherlands calls for an expansionary Euro-area strategy, although it has supported the new budget.

Any government, including a workers’ government that took power and was operating in the global system and not attempting a North Korean party, would have to look at its budget deficit position.

In Greece the left position should have been to focus on issues like the arms deal with Germany [under which Germany insisted that Greece go through a contract to buy submarines from Germany] and the refusal to collect taxes from the rich.

There is a caricature Keynesian position that says that there are no problems with deficits. There are problems with the deficit. The class differences relate both to the scale and the speed of the adjustments, but also the nature of the adjustments — whether they focus on armaments, wealth taxes, bank reserves, profits, and so on.

An issue which has been under-debated on the left in Britain, in my opinion, is the enormous cash reserves which non-financial companies have accumulated, and they don’t know where to put them. The left should have a position on that issue.

I don’t say that it is reactionary or unprincipled for a left party to have measures to reduce the deficit. If borrowing will be necessary to fund essential services, how do you prevent the cost of that spiralling out of control unless the overall deficit is dealt with in some way?

But the whole issue of deficits should be conducted on a European-calculated basis. Any budget policy which is calculated on a purely national basis, from the left or anywhere else, will inevitably end up in a reactionary position because of the inherent contradictions.

Social democracy and other progressive forces are running behind the shift that is taking place among sectors of capital. I think that’s true.

I don’t accept either the position that the current EU policies are shaped by a German drive for domination, or the one that they are shaped by German ruling-class stupidity.

Certainly there is a bias in all bourgeois-state policies to seek state advantage and to seek the extension of the national economy and influence. That is not unique to Germany. In fact since World War Two it may have been less true of Germany than of other EU member states, for obvious historical reasons.

The whole construct of the national debate, set by bourgeois forces including social democracy, is incapable of understanding that the contradictions of the system have moved beyond national borders and require solutions which transcend national borders.

That is the genesis of the fact that everywhere states have been making calculations which, when aggregated, cannot produce a solution to the crisis they face.

Added to that is an ideological factor. The media moves politicians. In Germany Bild-Zeitung came out with the famous headline: “Alle wollen unser Geld!” — “everyone wants our money” — that was powerful Suo-Su type articulation of a politics that was shamelessly nationalist (not so much imperialist, but rather nationalistic).

Just as the Murdoch empire captivated Conservative and Labourite politicians here, so the chaotic nature of the system means that a factor like the media can exploit the vacuum and assert a particular position which is a very powerful driver of irrational policies.

Look at Cameron. What drives his stance of vetoing the fiscal treaty and then urging the other EU countries to integrate as fast as possible? He is driven not by British capital saying that is the optimal policy, but by fear of the media.

Socialist Party leader Emile Roemer
People on the left in Greece are beginning to believe that a united and electorally empowered left, and a left-wing government, can be the initiator of a popular pro-work movement and the “indignant citizens’ movement” in the city squares, but opposed them. It vehemently opposed George Papandreou’s call for a referendum on the 26 of October cuts agreement.

Tsipras has also declared that he is prepared to accept a “vote of confidence” from Panos Kammenos and the Independent Greeks, an ultra-right, nationalist-chauvinist, but supposedly anti-memorandum split from ND. Kammenos party, which is polling around 8% is a product of ND’s u-turn from its supposedly anti-memorandum stance and, to a lesser extent, the deterioration of the electoral appeal of the previously dominant right-populist force, LAOS.

Kammenos made a long political career within ND and had an active political role in all the ND leaderships and governments from Mitsotakis through to Samaras. In the ND leadership contest at the end of 2009, Kammenos supported the ultra-neo-liberal and ultra-pro-memorandum and pro-USA Dora Bakogianni against Samaras.

Kammenos pretends to “fight against the establishment”, but he has formed a party staffed with spoiled rich-kids. The daughter of the leader of the “Pro Royal National Organisa tion of Greece” is a prominent member of his party.

In Tsipras’s theoretical scenario of Syriza needing Kammenos’s votes in order to form a “government of the left”, Kammenos would not hand over those votes without political preconditions. And those would probably be for Syriza’s “government of the left” not to attack the capitalists, the em- ployers, the bankers, the businessmen, and the shipowners whose class interest Kamenos represents; not to nationalise the banks and big business; not to reverse the privatisations of the public sector; not to rebuild the welfare state and pro- visions; not to tax the rich. Kammenos would demand that Syriza comply with his racist anti-immigration policy and his nationalistic policy against the Turkish minority in Thrace.

For a formation of a robust political united front of the left a “minimal” programmatic agreement should be reached based upon at least three preconditions. The first precondition is that the left give answers on the reasons for the current crisis. It should be agreed that the current crisis is a systemic, endemic crisis of the global capita list system, and not a Greek crisis or a debt crisis or a golden boys’ crises, or a matter of blunders by the “incompetent forces”. The “minimal” program must be of an anti-capitalist and socialist character.

The second condition should be the stance on the debt. The debt is a class weapon of the ruling class. It was created because the state’s revenues were eaten away due to the state- protected tax evasion of the rich and the state bailouts handed out to bankrupt companies and banks Our answer should be: not a penny for the creditors.

The third condition is that the left wing anti-capitalist proposal should not be “another stage” towards the struggle against capitalism and for socialism. It should be the occupa tion of a strategic position of the enemy during a class war which leads towards a truly democratic accountable radical transitional demands of the left.

A program of transitional demands is of paramount importance if it guides us to the demands that we fight for, and also points to the need to change the way that society is organised. It links the struggles today with the world that we are trying to build in the future.
The legacy of Agnes McLean

By Ann Field

McLean had joined the CP in 1942. After the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941 the CP dropped its ban on women joining the union, and McLean initially worked as a bookbinder before getting a job at the Rolls Royce Hillington plant on the outskirts of Glasgow in late 1939.

She joined the Transport and General Workers Union, but later transferred to the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), which reversed its ban on women joining the union only after a membership ballot in 1942.

Women workers at Rolls Royce — and throughout the whole of industry — were on lower rates of pay than their male counterparts. Briefly in the autumn of 1941, and then on a larger scale in October of 1943, women workers walked out on strike.

The opening speech at the Stockholm conference which launched the Appeal claimed that "the Peace Front" had been "considerably strengthened" by "the victory of People's China", the creation of the "German Democratic Republic" and the development of the atomic bomb by the Soviet Union!

Patria warned, in rather less than pacifist terms, that anyone who refused to sign the Appeal was "an accomplice and henchman of the warmongers".

Organisers of the Appeal eventually claimed that it had been signed by more than 273 million people, including the entire adult population of the Soviet Union and the other Stalinist states.

In Bulgaria the number of people who supposedly signed the Appeal was larger than the country's population. And the number of signatories claimed for Hungary meant that the Appeal had been signed by everyone over the age of five.

But this was how CP member Agnes McLean campaigned for peace.

In the late sixties McLean again became involved in equal pay disputes. The Scottish CP had decided to launch a campaign around equal pay, which was resurfacing as a major issue.

McLean spoke at a series of CP-organised public meetings in support of equal pay and at the 1969 STUC conference of equal pay. At that year’s STUC congress it was McLean, as a delegate from Glasgow Trades Council, who moved the composite motion on equal pay.

On the Hillington industrial estate, where she still worked in the Rolls Royce plant, McLean helped organise strike action in support of the equal pay campaign. But, in typical CP-fashion, it was brief, tokenistic, and organised in a top-down manner.

A 90-minute strike in Hillington in October of 1968, for example, saw women workers marching out of work at three o’clock in the afternoon, attending a rally addressed by Rolls Royce convener George Cormack (also a lifelong CP member), who informed them that “further token stoppages might (sic) be necessary”, and then dispersing.

Beating Jimmy Reid to it by seven years, McLean resigned from the CP in 1969 and joined the Labour Party. Her explanation was: “I felt the party was unable to convince people that they, the CP, were the party of the future.”

By the mid-1970s McLean had been elected as a Glasgow District Councillor. From 1978 onwards, shortly after having retired from working at Rolls Royce, she was a Strathclyde Regional Councillor and a member of the Labour Group executive until 1988.

De-selected as a councillor in March of 1994, McLean tried to secure a seat in the East End of Glasgow but was outvoted at the selection meeting. She died in April of the same year.

During her near twenty years as a District and Regional Councillor McLean had variously been a member of such august bodies as the Scottish Opera Advisory Council, the Theatre Royal Board of Management, the Glasgow Associates for Conference and Tourism Services, and the Regional Economic and Industrial Committee. Today’s new generation of union and political activists need to learn from the failings of Agnes McLean’s generation.

Paying uncritical “tribute” to her is a deliberate exercise in mis-education. (In fact, the January meeting of Glasgow Trades Union Council agreed that this year’s May Day celebrations would not be used as a commemoration of Agnes McLean. Members of the Executive Committee were presumably otherwise wiser.)

The West of Scotland trade union movement — and indeed the trade union movement everywhere — should be prepared to confront its past and the damage wrought on it by Stalinism. It should cease transforming its history into a mythology which functions as a political comfort blanket.

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SOLIDARITY 9

Feature

Publicity for this year’s Glasgow May Day demonstration and rally refers to the celebrations including a “tribute” to Agnes McLean.

McLean’s politics and activities were representative of a particular period in the history of the West of Scotland trade union and labour movement. But how far one should pay “tribute” to them is another question.

McLean’s generation grew up in the shadow of “Red Clydeside”. Her father was a member of John MacLean’s Scottish Workers’ Republican Party. As a child she attended a Presbyterian Sunday School and then a Socialist Sunday School.

It was a generation which gravitated towards Stalinism. It was a generation which stood foursquare with the Stalinist counter-revolution and the champion of anti-fascism (even as it hailed the Hitler-Stalin pact).

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The West of Scotland trade union movement — and indeed the trade union movement everywhere — should be prepared to confront its past and the damage wrought on it by Stalinism. It should cease transforming its history into a mythology which functions as a political comfort blanket.
How student workers got organised

By Daniel Lemberger Cooper (Royal Holloway Students’ Union President, University of London Union Vice President-elect, and Youth Officer, GMB K19 branch)

Our campaign at Royal Holloway began as an awareness-raising campaign about rights at work. We put out posters and leaflets around campus which focused on basic rights around pay, terms and conditions of employment, and safety, and made the basic case for trade unionism.

We held “know your rights” meetings, which we targeted both at university staff and campus students. We established a relationship with the existing GMB branches on campus and found out shift-change times for cleaners, porters and grounds staff so we were able to leaflet them.

We held a meeting for student workers employed by the Students’ Union in November 2011 aimed at discussing what people wanted to see improved. There were a lot of really good discussions as well as a lot of enthusiasm to start campaigning around the issues facing working students.

Workers themselves ran the meeting, and decided to organise an informal reps’ structure with elected reps for each section of the workforce (bar staff, catering, etc., etc.). The idea was that these reps would be points-of-contact for people to raise issues or issues at work, and also make the case for trade unionism and organisation amongst the wider student workforce.

DEMANDS

The meeting also produced a list of demands based on what people felt the key issues were. The three focuses agreed upon were breaks, pay and representation.

The demands made the case for people to be able to take the breaks they were legally entitled to, which is an endemic problem in a lot of service and retail sector workplaces. The pay demand started as a demand for a small increase but as the campaign has become more ambitious it has grown to include pay that’s fair and respects the work that people do. The representation demand is about making sure that the membership form is the first thing we asked people to do. A lot of the workers didn’t know what a trade union was, and how to get signed up for better representation started by calling for an improved staff board, but that’s since shut down meaning that the SU management recognised the GMB and begins to bargain collectively with the workforce.

The campaign produced an industrial bulletin called Student Worker which brought all our demands and ideas together. People found that hugely useful, because it was a concrete way of articulating what was going on, and it showed that people could come together. As well as people leafleting their workmates, activists also set up a stall and had the bulletin handed out to every student on campus. It generated interest across the industry.

SELF-ORGANISE

That’s not to say we avoided talking about it; we always had membership forms available at every meeting, but it wasn’t only a case of talking about helping workers self-organise to win change at work, rather than a campaign that was simply about recruiting people to the GMB. Around 25 workers have joined the union, which is a good start.

Our model has been very “industrial” in the sense of being fundamentally based on a group of workers in a given workforce — the Royal Holloway SU — self-organising around concrete, material issues. We don’t want to set up a servicing hub for student workers or co-opt a couple of activists to just do casework. Getting people to think of themselves as workers, and making the basic case for fighting trade unionism, has been a key part of what we’ve been doing since the beginning. We’ve tried to go beyond the idea of pushing trade union membership as “protection” or as an insurance policy and towards building a conception of collective organisation as an engine for change.

One of the wider reasons we wanted to do this was to challenge some of university management’s discourse about work and “employability”. University bosses and the government see education as training for the workplace. There’s a lot of pressure on students to see time at university as being about them making themselves a more attractive commodity for their future employers.

Big corporations come onto campus to push their gradu ate schemes and talk about the wonderful jobs we can get if we do well at university, but the reality is that most of us won’t have access to those “good” jobs — we’ll be getting low-paid, semi-precarious jobs in the service, retail and hospitality sector. As a sociologist, I want people to be leaving university with an understanding of work that’s based on class and class struggle. Helping people develop a class consciousness and see themselves as workers while they’re still on campus is an important part of that.

The campaign has also been about connecting students to the existing labour movement. At one of the campaign’s meetings, we also discussed the public sector pensions dispute and how student workers could support the strikes. I wanted to build up an idea of the campus as a workplace, and show how nothing happened on campus, or in wider society, without someone’s labour power making it happen, and show working students how they were a part of that.

Our campaign at Royal Holloway has shown that the model can work. It’s powerful positive propaganda against those people in the labour movement who say you can’t organise transient workers in semi-precarious, low-paid jobs.

10 SOLIDARITY

Daniel will speak about the campaign at Student Worker Solidarity 2012, a networking and skills-sharing conference for young workers and working students hosted by GMB Southern Region Young Members’ Network and co-sponsored by GMB Goldsmiths, Goldsmiths SSWU, and People and Planet. SWS2012 takes place on Saturday 12 May at Goldsmiths College. More: timsale@studentsunion.com
Ford strike ballot as bosses slash pensions

By Todd Hamer

Despite the best efforts of the Unison leadership, Unison members in the NHS have voted to reject the government's pensions offer and take "sustained industrial action". 50.4% of members voted decisively to join them should fight for their right to do so.

The turn out was just over 2%, a significant increase from the 1.1% turn out that accompanied the ballot for the strikes and other industrial action. The turn out of only 7% is quite disappointing but in some ways is not unexpected. Indeed, having given every indication that the leadership is unwilling to lead a fight, it is hardly surprising 85% of the membership abstained on the vote. However, it is a lie to say there is "no mandate" to take further industrial action. The Unison leadership is unwilling to lead a fight, but it is abundantly clear that the membership will not accept the ballot result.

By Stewart Ward

Unite will ballot its 2,500 members at Ford across the UK for strike action after the motor industry giant announced plans to close its only in-house pension scheme to new entrants. The vote will come as bosses at the company's Dagenham plant in east London have promised to try and "embarrass" MMP in front of its own workforce, having "lost" its negotiations with the workers in a public relations stunt. Unite, the workers' union, has to maintain control of the most important issue of the moment - pensions.

Tube Lines strikes "rock solid"

By Darren Bedford

Tube union RMT has declared the first three days of strike action in an ongoing battle for pensions that was initiated by maintenance and emergency response workers as "rock solid". The workers, employed by the company that operates the Bakerloo Line, were taken out of work by the company this week, but research has shown that the strike has been well supported by members.

Tube Lines workers have, for example, been taken out of work by non-ERU staff, showing that management's commitment to breaking the strike out weighs their commitment to having emergency vehicles operated only by properly trained staff!

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- Unite debates political strategy

By a Unite activist

The biennial policy conference of the union Unite takes place at the end of June. It is important that Unite members take the opportunity to argue for policies which would help make Unite not just politically and industrially against the Tories, and against the Labour Party leadership.

One of the most important motions that would now attempt to reclaim the 5% retirement, would involve Unite fighting against the right wing coup in order to reclaim control of the dispute for rank-and-file workers.

Unite members in the NHS will take "industrial action" of some form on 10 May, along with Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members and members of the University and College Union (UCU) in FE colleges and "post-92" universities. The 25,000 Unison members who have voted decisively to join them should fight for their right to do so.

The role of socialists in trying to defend the NHS, the NHS community and trade-union based campaigns, with a political campaign to defend public health care.

The political risks of leaving the government and the Labour Party to improve--the NHS, with the aim of trying to "embarrass" MMP in front of its own workforce, having "lost" its negotiations with the workers in a public relations stunt.

MMP lock out fights continue

By Jane Gallagher

Workers in the UK and internationally have expressed their opposition to how the workers in Bootle have been treated. The public pressure for the campaign by Unite, the workers' union, to be supported is "rock solid". RMM in front of its major clients, which include such public campaigns in support of the workers in Bootle is "rock solid".

Tube union RMT has de-clared the first three days of strike action in an ongoing battle for pensions that was initiated by maintenance and emergency response workers as "rock solid". The workers, employed by the company that operates the Bakerloo Line, were taken out of work by the company this week, but research has shown that the strike has been well supported by members.

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Solidarity can win London school fight

From the Tower Hamlets Class Struggle bulletin

After the 24 April strike against pay cuts and redundancies, the Foundation Girls School in East London, where management is showing signs of shifting, have backedtrack from cutting support staff pay this year.

This has only happened because of the united action taken by members of the NUT and Unison. But management still plan to get pay next year.

CGFS workers plan another strike around 11 May.

This dispute is a breath of fresh air blowing through the local labour movement, which had been demoralised by the surrender of the national union leaderships in the pensions battle.

What are the lessons to be learned from the CGFS dispute so far?

Unity. The NUT and Unison have worked together and prevented management from dividing them by using different tactics, holding separate staff meetings and offering different solutions for teachers and support staff.

Organisation. From the start of the dispute, both unions held regular joint meetings, ensured the use of a strike fund and produced a strike bulletin for all the staff in the school.

No member of staff is uninformed about the dispute or uncertain as to how they can get involved.

Everywhere. All decisions made in relation to the CGFS dispute have been made by the members themselves and on the basis of regular votes. The reps have provided leadership, but it is not the stifling, top-down kind supplied by the national executives of our unions.

The attitude throughout has been: why would we agree to lie down and do nothing when you are cutting our pay and jobs? Why would we allow you to do this to us without a fight? Why do you think we would agree to pay with our livelihoods for a budget crisis that is not of our making? There is no reason why we should. We must not take any responsibility for the crisis — whether local or national. When governments need to find cash to resolve a crisis they that want resolved they can.

The government found £1.5bn in February this year to pay off PFI bills in the NHS because they knew it would be too damaging if the NHS crumbled too quickly. In Tower Hamlets in 1998, the Rotherhithe Tunnel was closed for maintenance work by Tower Hamlets council. The works were likely to be shut through Christmas, affecting the takings of the shops in Docklands and Canary Wharf. The businesses pooled to gather and paid up £100k to get the work done. When bosses and the rich need the money, it’s there. They just choose not to spend it on us, and then try to tell us there isn’t any. This is nonsense. We must not fall for it.

What will help CGFS workers win? Solidarity. Other schools and public services in Tower Hamlets must invite speakers from CGFS, support them on their picket lines and above all, when they are faced with restructuring and cuts, follow suit using CGFS as a template for how to win.

Murdock scandal: is Cameron next?

By Pat Murphy

There is now a serious possibility that the evidence uncovered in the Leveson Inquiry might bring down David Cameron.

The Tory leader had set up Leveson to isolate himself from the phone-hacking scandal and to manage any damage from his relationship with special adviser Andy Coulson. This also meant Cameron distancing himself from Murdoch and his empire after years of working to get as close as possible.

When Murdoch gave evidence to the Inquiry last week he made it clear that the ‘Tonyes’ attempt to slip quietly out of bed with News International would come at a price.

REVEALED

He revealed that the Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt had been working to help the media mogul full control of BSkyB when his job was to scrutinise whether the take-over bid broke competition law.

Hunt only got his cabinet post because his predecessor, Vince Cable, was considered to be biased against Murdoch and deemed therefore lacked independence. Such was the controversy surrounding the proposed takeover that the media regulator Ofcom advised Hunt to pass the issue over to the Competitions Commissioner. He insisted on handling it himself and on his ability to be independent.

It turns out that, while declaring his honesty, he was (to paraphrase Oscar Wilde) stealing our supper.

Murdoch drew attention to nearly 200 pages of emails and texts between News International and the Hunt’s office which demonstrated how much they were working to facilitate the multi-billion pound deal. One key email shows that Hunt’s decision not to refer the merger to the Competitions Commission was aimed at removing obstacles for NI.

Later a group of media companies who had opposed the deal described how they were blocked from getting any access to Hunt to put their case.

So Cable was biased against Murdoch was a problem, but favouring him and his empire was, it would seem, absolutely fine.

Hunt was immediately under pressure to resign. But, as Dennis Skinner pointed out in Parliament, he did what all posh boys do when they are in trouble, sack the servants — in this case Hunt’s special adviser, Adam Smith.

It’s inconceivable that this will be enough to save Hunt. The media debate has turned up Leveson to isolate him — whether he will put their case.

The immediate damage to the government is, though, unavoidable and maybe terminal. They are now all associated with trying to oil the wheels of a voracious and monopo-

The worst scenario for Cameron and the Coalition is that the Tony leader is found to have acted improperly in no different from all in fundamentals all the staff in the school.

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