Fight Tory plan to axe benefits

MAKE THE RICH PAY

Jobs for all!

Tories want to scrap Housing Benefit for under-25s. If you can't afford to pay rent, and can't or won't live with your parents, then it's a friend's floor or the streets.

See page 7

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See page 7
What is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty? 

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

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

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

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

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers’ struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups. We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

* Independent working-class representation in politics.
* A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
* A workers’ charter of trade union rights — to organise, to decide how we organise and alliances.
* A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
* Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
* 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 transgelgender people.
* Black and ethnic workers’ unity against racism.
* Open borders.
* Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
* Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace to community to global 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.
* If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to sell — and join us!

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LRC Youth makes an impact

By a delegate

Young Labour’s annual conference in Newcastle on 23-24 June decided to make its “priority campaign” youth homelessness.

It resolved that Labour should commit to building at least one million new council homes, to ease the housing waiting list of five million in England and Wales alone, and the wealth of the nationalised banks should be used to fund socially useful projects such as this.

After a close debate, it also resolved that Labour should abolish the “right to buy” council housing.

It agreed on repealig the anti-trade union laws, imposing a moratorium on sacking, encouraging young workers to join trade unions. All new public workers jobs created by the government should include union membership. The LRC, and Labour should push for a 35 hour working week and equalisation of the minimum wage across the UK.

The conference’s guest speaker Ed Balls was sharply questioned about pandering to racist sentiment in his statements about immigration.

Much of this was won by the work of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), Youth, which produced bulletins, organised fringe meetings, and spoke successfully on many left-wing motions.

A petition garnered over 100 signatures, calling for next year’s conference to be more democratically organised and allow clearer debate, and for more guarantees of conference policy getting implemented.

www.treyouth.org.uk

Let in more migrants, not fewer!

By Richard Swanley

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

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Shaking hands with the “Brits”

By Liam McInty

Former Provisional leader Martin McGuinness has shaken hands with Queen Elizabeth. What does this mean? Yes really.

After a lifetime of fighting for “Brits out”, McGuinness welcomed the head of the British state to a Diamond Jubilee do in Belfast on 27 June.

McGuinness’s justification for the meeting speaks volumes about the problem of Northern Ireland’s communal carve-up of a “peace process”.

Shaking hands with the Queen is, said McGuinness, “an historic moment for the north that we are prepared to respect what they believe in, that we are still Irish republicans.” In other words, let the Queen speak for the Republic. Sinn Fein will continue to represent the nationalist community.

Throughout the Troubles, Sinn Fein protested that its ideology was about universal rights such as national self-determination. Now, as Workers’ Liberty has said, a Catholic-chauvinist sectarian ideology.

Sinn Fein’s post-conflict willingness to content itself with managing the antagonisms between what are presumed to be irrevocably divided communities has shown a particular and ongoing increase in violence against both British and European migrant workers.

At the Young Labour conference on 23-4 June, both Tom Watson and Ed Balls claimed that “Manor’s new so-called ‘tough approach’ is not about pandering to racism. They said it responds to people’s concerns about cheap migrant labour being used to undercut wages and conditions. Immigration is a class issue”.

This is indeed a class issue. According to official figures (Guardian, 1 April 2008), immigration generally increased living standards for already-settled. But the bosses can divide already-settled workers from migrants, then the migrants become super-exploited, and the already-settled lose out too. We need a new, united. To do this effectively we have to challenge the racist immigration controls which systematically criminalise migrants, fight the media and government-driven demonisation of migrants, refuges, and asylum seekers. Labour’s current failed change of heart does the exact opposite.

Unemployment, lack of housing, and the decay of public services are caused by the people who created the financial crisis — bankers, big business and the politicians who are basing the lasting standards working-class people have fought for and won.

British working-class people cannot fight effectively for their own interests without standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who come here to flee persecution and build a better life.

Socialism, the labour movement must fight for solidarity between British born and migrant workers, against immigration controls, for decent wages and conditions, and public services for all, and against racism.


NEWS

2 SOLIDARITY
Gove’s demolition plan for schools

By PatYarker

As an ex-journalist, Tory education minister Michael Gove knows how to use the press to further his own agenda. An article leaked from his department to the Daily Mail (20 June) flagged up Gove’s intention to replace GCSE exams taken by most students at 16 (and brought in by the Tories thirty years ago) with a system based on the previous model: O- Levels and CSEs.

There was much excitement among Tories who rushed to equate O-Levels with “a ticket to nowhere” because the exam was deemed to fail four out of five members of the school population. Some commentators lamented the damage caused by the return to a “two-tier system”, noting that CSEs, which many teachers struggled for years to abolish, were now regarded as a par on O- Levels.

Yet the current version of GCSE, departing from its original conception, is already a two-tier system under a single designation. Students are divided into those deemed capable of sitting A-level Tier paper and so given the chance of securing top grades, and those who can secure at best a grade C via the Foundation tier. It has become common for graded students awarded less than a C to be told they “failed” their GCSE.

Additionally, alternative qualifications such as the iGCSE or the IB have been touted as better-able to differentiate among the bottomest attainers. A system which had two tiers might well provide an advance on what pupils currently endure.

Gove’s plans reiterate yet again a ranking-class obsession with narrowed academic standards and its enduring neglect of the needs of a sizeable minority constructed by the system as “nons academic” or “less able”.

Gove’s plans drew fire from some within Tory ranks. Kenneth (now Lord) Baker, who retains his Education Secretary status, warns against “resurrecting a failure”. But the Tory right are, as the ambitious Gove must have calculated, ecstatic.

They deny that all children are educable and that state should ensure high-quality education for all.

Their ideal is a privately-funded model catering for a privileged caste (the public school system) with high-fee-paying pupils, and a star system, foundation schools, vari- eties of special and of specialist school, and full and largely free, does not register, even as an ideal.

Norms of bourgeois democratic accountability, the flip-side of a com- mitment to public service, are another target for Gove’s wrecking ball.

Once a school becomes an academy and is re- moved from local authority oversight and some vestige of local democratic ac- countability, parents have no meaningful say in what the school does, and no se- cure way to assert any rights.

Hence the great majority of academies get away, for example, with selling food to pupils which fails to meet nutritional stan- dards legally required of maintained schools.

As Gove’s acceler- ated future exam -plans are put forward, concerns mount that which academies can continue to do is what they like over admissions to do, even as an ideal.

The DfE estimates that between 2011 and 2013 there will be an extra £1 bil- lion on these schools on top of their normal funding.

Gove has already spent £337 million funding such schools — a big chunk of it

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According to the BBC (26 June) a number of Ofsted inspectors have no teaching experience whatsoever.

Other reports suggested that at least two inspectors were former head teachers of schools failing against Ofsted criteria (noted that left their posts.

This will come as no surprise to many teachers.

Gove has used Ofsted as a kind of crucifixion instrument hung over the heads of teachers everywhere. If the school fails it will have to become an Academy.

Classroom teachers face constant erosion of their conditions of employment and pension rights combined with an ever-increasing over-bureaucratic workload. Ofsted makes matters worse.

Ofsted inspections are an officious and pointless waste of learning time. Since few of them look at more than fifteen per cent of an hour-long lesson, they don’t even evaluate a representative sampling of educational standards.

The threat of an inspec- tion is used as an excuse for developing a school management agenda not in the interests of staff, such as extra meetings and compulsions “training proj- ects” which only add to ex- ces- sive stress levels.

Worse yet, under new DfE guidelines (which many schools are unhappi- ly and uncritically applying), a single negative Ofsted observation could trigger capability proceed- ings against a member of staff, regardless of experi- ence, past work history or personal context. All based on a few minutes and a brief browse through exercise- ers’ books.

To have confirmed that Ofsted are recruiting — via, please note, private consultation companies — individuals with little or no experience of the reali- ties of the role is an insult. It is an insult to the profes- sional integrity and stan- dards of school staff. An insult to their intelligence to expect them to grate- fully accept the results of an inspection they neither wanted nor needed, staff being those who, it now appears, are least ca- pable of understanding that which they inspected.

A clear message needs to be sent to the teaching unions; non-compli- ance with Ofsted should be one of our priorities as a vital part of the next round of non-strike ac- tion.

Clegg and Gove visit Durand Academy in south London. The school spent nearly £200,000 on hiring a PR firm!

The Daily Mail reported this week that the Durand Academy in South London had spent a considerable sum on hiring PR company Brownhill to “deal with the government”. However, the DfE has confirmed that it is spending at least £1 billion on PR work, leading to calls for Ofsted inspections to be de-funded. The school is one of many receiving extra funding from the government, with the aim of improving standards. However, this has led to concerns about the use of public money and the potential for conflicts of interest. Gove has been heavily criticized for his handling of the education system, with many calling for a return to a more traditional model of state-funded schools. The controversy surrounding the Durand Academy highlights the ongoing debate over the future of the educational system in the UK.
By Mark Osborn

Egypt: the army and the Muslim Brothers manoeuvre

The announcement of Mursi’s victory seems to have come about due to the Free Syrian Army, the political arm, and the SCAF. Under the SCAF, the military will continue to control internal security, defence and foreign policy, leaving domestic matters largely in Mr Mursi’s hands.

The announcement of Mursi’s victory, liberals and the youth who took to the streets and actually overthrew Mubarak drama...the vote was announced last Sunday. Mursi celebrated his victory, but the military’s grip remains strong.

Brotherhood supporters celebrate. What deal have they struck with the army?

Syria: sectarian lines deepen

Katy Clark, Labour MP for North Ayrshire and Arran, spoke to Solidarity about Greece’s election and the future of the left in Europe.

Syria did really well. People are disappointed by the US, but considering where they were coming from and the international pressure, they did astonishingly well.

I think what happened in France was also important and the debate throughout Europe is beginning to shift.

Those arguing against austerity are getting stronger. It doesn’t mean we are winning, and it is automatic that we will be successful in getting the policies we need, but it is a shift in the right direction.

For most people the economic crisis started in 2008 and it’s fair to say the left has not been successful in providing leadership and articulating the arguments about how we should respond.

It is not any individual’s fault, it’s a collective problem, and we could discuss at great length why, but those who have argued for massive cuts in public spending and welfare have been very successful in winning the public argument. That is beginning to shift. I think Syriza are a very important part of that shift in the debate.

I think it is essential that Syriza are an effective opposition, that they oppose in such a way that they have credibility, and at the next elections in Greece they do well enough to form a Government.

No one is suggesting there are easy solutions to what needs to be done. But the extreme austerity and massive cuts in public spending in Greece is unacceptable. Syriza are part of that alternative, and I pay tribute to the campaigning they have been doing to convince people. It has clearly appealed to a lot of people especially young people.

The fact that the [Greek] electorate has been on everybody’s TV screens has meant that now we are debating austerity and debating an alternative. I also think it has given the Labour Party leadership a bit more confidence in doing so.

Any coalition will not be very stable, it is far from a convincing win for ND, and there could be more elections in the future. Even the parties in favour of the deal are now arguing for a renegotiation so Syriza have been successful in that sense.

I think it’s important that we build alliances throughout the left in Europe. We have argued very strongly with that in the past. We have huge and significant left traditions in Europe and, maybe because of language and other reasons, those traditions have not been shared.

Q: How should the left react to the divide being posed between those in Greece who are hav ing to ‘bail out’ those whose economies are failing?

WHOSE EUROPE?

In Westminster we talk about “the narrative”. The left has failed. The movement throughout Europe should have a common narrative.

Essentially this debate centres on whether you have a bankers’ Europe or a people’s Europe. That isn’t down to whether or not you have a EU or how that would be organised, but how we operate as countries and as a society. The struggle of the peoples of Europe to all our struggle, and that should be the way that we look at it.

In terms of the Greek situation, the anti-austerity left was not united. Syriza was successful in bringing together a lot of the strands of the left, but not all. If the Communist Party tradition in Greece had come on board then they may have been successful. I don’t want to attack the left, but yet again we pay for the price of divis...
Greece: the rise of the Golden Dawn fascists

By Theodora Polenta

These are the election results for the neo-Nazi movement Golden Dawn, in Greece.
• National Elections 2009: 0.29% (19,466 votes)
• European Elections 2009: 0.46% (23,564 votes)
• Athens Elections 2010: 3.94% (21,882 votes)
• National Elections May 2012: 6.92% (425,980 votes)
• National Elections June 2012: 6.92% (425,980 votes)

The Greek movement Golden Dawn, 2009: 0.46% (23,564 votes) 5.29% (10,222 votes) 2012: 6.92% (425,980 votes) is equivalent of the Tories: percentage of the left, Syriza scored almost 27% for itself as a force of the anti-fascist movement Greece: the rise of the Golden Dawn movement, a force of the anti-fascist movement Greece: the rise of the Golden Dawn movement, 2009: 0.46% (23,564 votes) 5.29% (10,222 votes) 2012: 6.92% (425,980 votes)

Golden Dawn is small, a electoral force of the small properties and pensioners, and farmers who wants to hang on to their euro bank deposits.

The bulk of the ultra-right electorate is composed of petty bourgeois, well-off pensioners, and farmers who want to hang on to their small properties and their euro bank deposits. The main electorate of Golden Dawn is young people who want to hang on to what is left from what is termed the lumpenproletariat.

Golden Dawn has built some base in deprived, ghettoised and isolated neighbourhoods and ghost cities in Athens, where refugees, immigrants, and marginalized sections of the working classes have been left to rot. Golden Dawn’s electoral results were partly a product of that work in neighbourhoods of Athens. However, many Golden Dawn voters live in remote rural areas of Greece where there are no “foreigners.”

After the May election, the stance of both Synaspismos (the main component of Syriza) and KKE could be summed up as follows: People voted for Golden Dawn to express their anger against the memorandum and the political establishment; but the vote did not express an acceptance and endorsement of fascist and racist politics.

That assessment was partly refuted by June 17, between May and June, and Golden Dawn’s openly Nazi character was amply exposed. Golden Dawn people attacked students and ordinary people who do not look like their standard of the Aryan race; or organised a massive armed attack on refugees in Patra, expelling the murderers of a 14 year old Greek young man by an immigrant.

Golden Dawn activists into the political of SEK union group (linked to the SWP in Britain). They sent death threats to veteran leftist Manolis Glezos, and threatened councilors from the left coalition Antarsya and prominent leaders of the anti-fascist movement.

One third of Golden Dawn’s May voters switched, but they were replaced by racist and possibly fascist voters from the older-established far-right movement Laos, whose percentage plummeted from 2.9% in May to 1.5% in June. In June as in May, over 50% of the police force voted for Golden Dawn. During the last two years, with some exceptions on the revolutionary left and the various immigrant and refugee organisations, the left has had little about forming a front to confront the emerging fascist-racist threat in the streets, in the neighbourhod, in the workplace and in every section of the Greek society.

On 7 June, on TV, Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kasidias threw water at a Syriza woman MP and slapped a Golden Dawn MP. Protest demonstrations were organised on 8 June but there was no central call from Syriza or KKE to participate, though members from both parties did come out.

When Golden Dawn exposed the事实 of a young Greek by an immigrant in Patra, mobilising Nazis thugs from Athens to attack an abandoned factory, such refugees were living, neither Syriza nor KKE in Patras made an initiative.

Since May KKE [the Irish-Stalinist Greek Communist Party] has begun to challenge the threat from Golden Dawn. But KKE’s polemic against Golden Dawn is mostly restricted to the pages of its newspaper Rizospastis, and all the articles in Rizospastis focus on the historical role of Nazism during World War II and the Greek resistance, led by members of the Communist Party.

The last statement by the Secretary General Alexis Tsipras, about the Golden Dawn parties to deal with the threat to parliametary democracy posed by Golden Dawn, expresses a lack of understanding of fascism and the way to counter it. Golden Dawn in power would dissolve parliament and all the remaing democratic capacity of parliament. But the bourgeois parliamentary bourgeois parties of Pasok and ND want not to do and cannot lead the fight against fascism and racism.

The last of the Padememados coalition government was to pass a law for the construction of 31 concentration camps for “illegal” immigrants.

This was the mark of a government that did not hesitate to form a coalition with the openly racist Laos party of Georgios Karatzaferis and put in the cabinet the fascist MPS Bortidis and Georgiadis. Pasok cabinet minister Xrisochoidis (citizen protection) declared that illegal immigrants were responsible for the most crimes and that law and order was the main concern of the Greek people. Health minister Aris Tzitzikostas also Pasok, said that illegal immigrants should be put in separate units, including the hospitals and all immigrants from certain countries should be put in quarantine.

Athens mayor Giorgos Kaminis started the crusade to “reinvent and reconquer” the centre of Athens — police stormed immigrant areas with the aim of deporting as many as possible. Antonis Samaras emphaesised ND’s commitment to act against “illegal immigrants”. The Greek toddlers and kids are given priority in kindergarten over the children of immigrants in the “kindergartens”, he said.

Although the mainstream reaction of the world condemned the public display of violence in the TV attack by a Golden Dawn representative on women from Syriza and KKE, Samaras said that the violence of the Golden Dawn was the only way to protect the “f... of the Left”. Thanos Poulidis, as a ND ex-leader said that Antarsya is the equivalent of the Golden Dawn, and that the violence of the Golden Dawn was the only way to destroy the “f... of the Left”. Thanos Poulidis, as a ND ex-leader, called it the “fascist movement of Golden Dawn”.

SOLIDARITY 5

The anti-fascist committee must at the same time to address social problems, racism and poverty and by the ghettosising and dumping of all immigrants in the most deprived areas. They must fight for decent housing, food, education, etc., for all, with a powerful defence squads alongside the Anti-fascists. The need for mass organisation and for all.

Support the struggle of the workers and all the working class around the world.

Send your solidarity to: Indian Committee, 7 High Street, London W1U 5AB (www.workers-iran.org) and www.turkeystrikeban.org
A century and a half ago, workers' leaders from a number of European countries met in St. Martin's Hall in London under a banner proclaiming "All men are brothers." The organisation they founded has come to be known as the First International. Last week at the giant Bella Center in Copenhagen, a much larger conference representing many more workers was held under the banner formed as a result: IndustriALL.

If it seem to be comparing the two events, it's not to wrap IndustriALL in the glory of that legendary First International. It's because the parallels they exist are not flattering.

The First International was Eurocentric, male-dominated and paralysed by in-fighting. While some of its leaders such as Marx and Engels had a clear view of the direction the workers' movement must follow, others were — to put it mildly — cranks. The First International was a Marxian organisation in spite of Marx's participation in it. It was not even social democratic, as many of its members were anarcho-syndicalist and lasted for more than a decade. It isn't until the formation of the Second International in 1889 that one could speak of a global organisation of workers united behind socialist ideas.

IndustriALL meant to be the biggest and most powerful of the global union federations, which are unions of unions around the world organised by sector or profession. It's a merger of three existing federations, some of which have been more than a century. These were the metal workers, the chemical, energy and mine workers; and the textile, leather and garment workers. The first day of the congress was devoted to the business of dissolving those three global unions.

What followed was a bit reminiscent of the First International, but not in an ideological sense. The Latin American delegates nosily walked out, furious at their reduction in representation on IndustriALL's Executive. As they pointed out, in one of the key global union federations that has just dissolved itself (the metal workers), Latin America had 15% of the seats. That was reduced to 10%. They felt they were being cut out and replaced by powerful and rich northern European unions including Germany and the Nordic countries. As one put it in a speech at congress, "one dollar one vote" was a "bourgeois form of democracy." They wanted the leadership of the organisation to reflect the size of the working class, not how rich it was.

**FEMALE**

They were not the only ones to feel under-represented. The report from the Credentials Committee noted in its main conclusion: "There are none of the eight elected officials who is a woman."

An examining the Executive, there was little effort to ensure equal participation by women, who were allocated, at best, 30% of the seats.

This continues the practice at other global union federations. For example, the food workers (IUF) required delegations to its recent congress to be at least 40% female. Delegates have been elected without requirement last votes. When a male European delegate rose to challenge this, the IUF general secretary snapped, "I'm part of the IUC general secretary."

The Copenhagen launch of IndustriALL was supposed to be a celebration, so there was little in terms of politics. A ten point action plan was adopted committing the federation to global organizing, democracy and so on. Resolutions were passed against precarious work and for democracy in Fiji. An online campaign was launched to support striking Spanish miners.

There was none of the sharp ideological edge one used to find in some of the global union federations. The former leader of the International Metalworkers Federation, Heriberto Reyes, was not a Marxist or even a socialist.

The Luxembourg section of the Metalworkers had been in dispute with the body of the federation. At the congress, they voted against the addition of Latin America to the federation. The Latin American delegation walked out of congress, saying: "We want to have the right to lead the movement of our own people."

"There is a lot to hate about Britain." There can be no compromise with "[the] British culture" (which is banned here in Britain) worth thinking about rank-file factory committees.

"To describe 'Fahrenheit 911's' as a 'true British disease' is something else. It is war on Britain."

"It is a long time since I met any one foolish enough to be uncooperative. But this does not square with reality. One example, in the Scottish referendum, the driving force in the unions for 'no' was the Union Labour Party affiliate. But if the unions were under 'Labour control', then they would oppose 'no' as power does.

One of the many peculiarities of the political universe inhabited by the ISG is that everything (apart from itself) is either dead or about to expire. The left in Scotland included. It's a mess in which you have conspiracy theories for everything. A long time since I met anyone who was willing to commit the sin of co-operation.

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The government talks about getting people into work — and cuts jobs!

**Fight Tory plan to axe benefits!**

On 25 June David Cameron bid to shore up his support on the Tory right by floating plans to cut welfare benefits. All the proposed cuts would come on top of what’s already under way: drastic cuts in housing benefit and in eligibility for disabled benefit; increases in the state pension age; and more.

Cameron pitched his proposals as an appeal to hard-pressed working people who pay taxes and end up no better off than jobless people on benefits; and as a drive to get people into jobs.

He ignores six facts:

- 2.65 million people are unemployed. There are 2.65 million fewer jobs than there are people trying to get jobs. If all the jobless suddenly improved their job-getting abilities, that might “churn” the figures — some people currently with jobs would lose them, and some people without would get jobs — but there would still be 2.65 million jobless.
- Of those who have jobs, 1.4 million can only get part-time work, though they want full-time.
- The Government is rapidly cutting public-service jobs. At present, the number of private-sector jobs is rising a bit. That’s a recovery from the drastic private-sector crash in 2009 that would happen more or less whatever the Government did. With the global economy at best depressed, there is no guarantee that small increase of jobs will continue.
- Real wages are being pushed down, in part by the Government’s public-sector pay freeze. The pay of bosses of the top 100 companies rose 10% in 2011, but the income of a middle-class family fell 3.2%, to below its 2004-5 level. The government has cut the top income-tax rate back from 50% to 45%.
- The Government is cutting the legal minimum wage in real terms. In October, the money minimum-wage rate will be increased just 1.8% for over-21s, and not at all for under-21s. Inflation is 2.8% (CPI) or 3.1% (RPI). Many, in fact most, benefits are claimed by hand-pressed working people who have jobs but low pay. The proportion of households “in poverty” which are also “in work” has been increasing for a decade. More than half of all children “in poverty” live in “working households.”
- For example, Cameron proposes to abolish housing benefit because they move to find a job, and can’t instantly find a permanent one well-paid enough to pay the rent. Should stay with their parents in areas where there are no jobs!
- For example, Cameron spoke about housing benefit as if it is claimed only by the jobless. But 93 per cent of new housing benefit claims made between 2010 and 2011 were made by households containing at least one employed adult. The high housing benefit bill is a subsidy to the Government by the Government to profiteering landlords, generated by the refusal and then failure of successive governments to invest in cheap social housing.

The official Labour Party response to Cameron, from Work and Pensions front-bencher Liam Byrne, was pitiful. "Chaos at DWP is stalling the Government’s reforms... The Government’s welfare plans are shambolic..."

The labour movement should say: tax the rich heavily — not just income, but wealth. Nationalise high finance, and reorganise it as a public banking, pensions, and insurance service under democratic and workers’ control. Redirect investment to extend affordable social housing and public services, and thus create good, useful jobs for all!

According to the Royal College of Nursing, the Government’s cuts have already taken 26,000 “front-line” NHS jobs, and are set to take another 30,000. Already the number of teachers in schools has been cut by 10,000. Cameron sketched a big range of cuts, some of which he will discard as unworkable when they’ve done their job of rallying the rug-the-neckless brigade.

The proposals include:

**UNDER 25**

- Axing housing benefit for under-25s. (Currently 385,010 under-25s claim housing benefit, of whom 204,450 have children).
- Excluding people on higher incomes from council housing (and maybe also from housing association places).
- Uprating benefits only by the lower of prices and wages, so that they decrease both in real terms and relative to wages.
- Cutting benefit rates for those out of work for long periods.
- Further “capping” housing benefit so that large households in expensive areas have to move or become homeless.
- Cutting income support and possibly child benefit for single mothers if they have three or more children.
- Cutting off benefits after a time unless you pass a literacy and numeracy test.
- Making full-time work “for the dole” compulsory after a time.
- Refusing benefits to school-leavers until after they have first had a job.
- Paying welfare benefits “in kind” (vouchers?) rather than in cash.

Instructively, Cameron’s proposals do not include cuts in state pensions, or in other payments to the elderly such as free bus passes or winter fuel payments. Cameron started his speech by boasting that the Government has committed to raise pensions in line with whichever rises faster, prices or earnings, and to fold the complicated pension-credit system into an increased basic state pension. He skated over his government’s plans to raise the state pension age; but it’s true that benefits for people who are currently past pension age, or nearing pension age, are surviving this government’s cuts much better than benefits for younger people.

By now, possibly for the first time ever, people in their 60s are on average better-off, and less likely to be in poverty, than people in their 20s (Financial Times, 16 March 2012).

Older people have become better-organised, have campaigned harder, and use their votes more. The labour movement has failed to organise, inspire, and mobilise young people sufficiently. That is why Cameron’s proposals specially target younger people.

- Solidarity’s schedule is varying from usual around the Workers’ Liberty summer school, 29 June to 4 July. This issue is dated 29 June. Solidarity 252 will be dated 11 July.

**Help the AWL raise £20,000**

Over the weekend 29 June to 1 July Workers’ Liberty will be hosting our Ideas for Freedom conference.

Unlike at some other socialist and labour movement events, the participants will not be “fed a line”, talked down to or stopped from saying things which contradict the opinions of the “top table”. It may seem staggeringly obvious, but that is not the way to create a healthy socialist culture.

We will be having robust debate, discussing big ideas and arguing the line details of theory, contemporary policies and activist organisation.

You may or may not be there. You may or may not agree with us on everything, or even very much. But you may like our attitude.

Want to keep the spirit of critical socialist culture alive? Please send in a donation! You can also help our fundraising drive by:

- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post to us at 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/collage or campaign group
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 38 Railway Rd, SE1 3DC

Total raised so far: £15,107

We raised just £62 this week. Thanks to Dan, Ed, Emily, London AWL, Mick and Stuart

**Standing order authority**

To: ........................................ (your bank)

........................................ (its address)

Account name: ........................................

Account no.: ........................................

Sort code: ........................................

Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £.............................. To be paid on the ..................... day of the ..................... (month) 20.................. (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date ........................................

Signature ........................................

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**SOLIDARITY 7**

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Boycott Workfare is having a week of action in the UK from 7-13 July. SW campaigns to end forced unpaid work for people who receive benefits.

www.facebook.com/#!/boycottworkfare/events

www.boycottworkfare.org

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The government talks about getting people into work — and cuts jobs!
The legacy of PFI

By Todd Hamer

South London Healthcare NHS Trust includes Queen Mary Hospital in Sidcup, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich and Princess Royal Hospital in Bromley. Its budget shortfall (£1 million a week) is the equivalent of employing 1,200 nurses or doing 200 hip operations a week.

It is the first NHS organisation to go into the “unus- tainable providers regime” — a system set up by New Labour but never used. Under that regime an adminis- trator is brought in to run the Trust’s board and to rec- ommend measures directly to the Health Secretary about how to put the Trust on a more sustainable footing.

The Trust’s outgoing Chief Executive, Dr Christopher Strachey, says that the administrators will succeed where he has failed. He believes they will be able to se- cure a subsidy to help with two PFI deals that bleed funds by £4 million a year. Maybe, but only if the gov- ernment agrees to such a subsidy.

More to the point, Strachey has said the administra- tors are likely to sell off parts of the hospital estate and shut down services, shifting them onto primary care and community providers.

This Trust was recently shortlisted for an award for its quality of care, management and innovation. It has one of the best mortality rates and infection control records in the country. But it costs money to deliver this level of care. These standards cannot be met whilst private sector parasites demand their risk-free returns on their PFI racket. In a situation where the government is demand- ing NHS Trusts slash their budgets, the burdens of PFI schemes — massively expanded under New Labour — may send many Trusts into bankruptcy.

According to the Daily Telegraph up to 22 NHS trusts are facing serious financial difficulties because of expen- sive PFI schemes, and six are thought to have taken on unsustainable PFIs — massively expanded under New Labour — and may send many Trusts into bankruptcy.

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According to the Daily Telegraph up to 22 NHS trusts are facing serious financial difficulties because of expen- sive PFI schemes, and six are thought to have taken on unsustainable PFIs — massively expanded under New Labour — and may send many Trusts into bankruptcy.

The crucial thing is to get the information out there, to the wider public, which means particularly into doctor’s suggerys. Keep Our NHS Public has produced a postcard which patients can give to their doctors objecting to private treat- ment but there are obvious limits to this, as it’s potentially unfair to ask patients to forego treatment for their principles.

Then there’s the GP’s pledge written by John Lister of Health Emergency, which opposes GPs being pushed into privatisation.

I think we may also see more local campaigns around pri- vate beds in NHS hospitals. The Bill raises the cap on private beds from something in the order of two percent to 49 percent. Hospitals will have to become Foundation Trusts, and their basic obligation will be to stay out of the red — not to provide any particular services. They will shed services, both to Clinical Commissioning Groups and to direct private sector provision, which will take on more and more of the low- cost services and procedures. More private beds are the obvious way to make this up, but of course there can be a fight about that. There are already local campaigns linked to many hospitals and this is an issue they can take up and cam- paign on.

There may or may not be legal limits to what a Labour govern- ment can reverse. But our basic tack should be to demand that the Tory “reforms”, cancel as many private con- tracts as fast as possible — but also go beyond that.

Treatment rationing in the new NHS

By Todd Hamer

If you are losing your sight, in chronic pain or need a wart removed, your chances of being treated in the NHS are slim.

A survey commissioned by the Labour Party revealed that over 90% of Primary Care Trusts and shadow Clinical Com- missioning Groups are restricting access to treatment due to financial pressure. 125 assisted treatments are no longer available or severely restricted on the NHS due to the cuts.

But as the NHS shrinks the private sector moves in. Shadow Health Minister Andy Burnham described the ex- perience of a patient in west Yorkshire who received a letter from his GP informing him that treatment for a skin condi- tion was no longer available on the NHS and was given a menu complete with prices for treatments available at a pri- vate clinic.

When challenged about treatment rationing in the House of Commons, William Hague, deputising for the Prime Min- ister, claimed that this practice is illegal and any PCT / CCG that is denying treatment on financial grounds will be held to account by the government.

However, as health policy expert Allyson Pollock has pointed out, the legal power of the Secretary of State to en- sure provision of a comprehensive health service was delib- erately abolished as part of the Health and Social Care act.

Any legal challenge to treatment rationing would probably fail as the Secretary of State absolved himself of the “duty to provide” free NHS care.

Powers to decide which treatments are included in the free NHS care package was largely devolved to the Clinical Com- missioning Groups.

These organisations have a direct financial incentive to deny their patients treatment. Their members, as il- lustrated by the west Yorkshire example, have multiple links to the private sector.
The National Health Service was officially launched at Park Hospital in Davyhulme on 5 July 1948 by Health Secretary Nye Bevan. As he symbolically received the keys to the hospital, Bevan was conscious of the place the hospital would occupy in Britain's history.

Now, 64 years later, NHS bosses have been planning in secret to close it. Earlier this year the hospital was taken over from local managers by the Central Manchester Foundation Trust because they said the hospital’s finances are “unsustainable”. By June the new Trust bosses and NHS officials had come up with sweeping plans that would leave virtually nothing in the local area. A report to Greater Manchester NHS discussed, in secret, by Trafford Council’s Health Scrutiny Committee proposes the closure of the A&E department at the hospital (now called Trafford General) and of the Intensive Care Unit by April next year, the end of all children’s services at the hospital, and stopping all acute surgery. The Report says: “Critical Care Level 3 services (ICU) currently available at TGH should be reprovided elsewhere.” “The current model of Accident and Emergency (A&E) provision at TGH is not sustainable.” “A Paediatric Observation and Assessment unit (POAU) (children’s services) is not sustainable in the absence of a full, Type 1 A&E department.” “Emergency surgical services currently available at TGH should be reprovided elsewhere.” Save Trafford General campaign Chair Matthew Finnegan said: “This report passes a death sentence on the birthplace of the NHS.” 

The Save Trafford General campaign has organised a march and rally on 7 July – 11.00am from Golden Hill Park in the centre of Urmston — and is urging health campaigners to join local people in their protest.

• savetrafalgeneral.com

We lost the fight to stop Lansley’s Bill becoming law. How do we block implementation and force repeal?

This situation doesn’t exist in the devolved nations, which do not have the internal market [which was scrapped by the Blair government and then reintroduced in England after devolution]. As the NHS degenerates and fragments in England, that contrast will become even sharper - because what exists now is not really an internal market, but an external market, a market pure and simple.

Scrapping the market set-up would save enormous amounts of money which could be ploughed back into frontline services even if funding was not increased. In my area, amounts of money which could be ploughed back into front-market, a market pure and simple.

We need a much broader campaign, including creative use of social media.

PROTEST AGAINST OUTSOURCING

Friday 13 July

5.30–6.30pm, Capita HQ, 71 Victoria Street,
London SW1H 0XA

Protest against the threat to hand over more and more of the NHS to Capita and other profit-greedy “outsourcing” companies.

More details:

healthalarm1159.wordpress.com

Save Trafford General!

By Nik Barstow

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• savetrafalgeneral.com

We need co-ordinated action to save the NHS

By Vicki Morris

Against the backdrop of the new Health and Social Care Bill, and despite NHS budgets, Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) held its AGM on Saturday 23 June.

The meeting lasted just one hour but was followed by a public conference, “Reclaiming our NHS”, sponsored by a number of organisations including KONP, TUC, Unison, Unite, NHS Consultants Association, Socialist Health Association (SHA), Health Emergency and the NHS Support Federation (NSF).

There were about 60 people at the KONP AGM and around 350 at the conference. Both events showed the need for more coordination of NHS campaigning efforts. The KONP AGM was sometimes easy and sometimes fractious, but more like a family gathering than a campaign that could save the NHS. There are just 33 local KONP groups.

KONP runs on a federal model. Local groups are represented on the steering committee. The model has its virtues, but the KONP central office is run on a shoestring, it seems, and with a tiny staff.

COORDINATE

Key KONP activists Wendy Savage and John Lister have resisted the idea of an umbrella group to coordinate the campaigns to save the NHS, and resisted KONP assuming this role. Yet it seems that they have come under some pressure and realise they must raise their game.

They helped to call the bigger conference on Saturday, and at their AGM passed a “strategy statement” that said the organisation should aim to raise £200,000 a year in order to become “more professional”. (This seems to be about five times as much as they spend at the moment.)

Later, at the main conference, in a summing up plenary session, KONP activist and SHA chair Brian Fisher said that the suggestions coming from the day’s workshops would be collated and followed up on by KONP.

Is KONP up to taking on the vital coordinating role that is needed to save the NHS? It seems to be assuming a greater role — but reluctantly. There are tensions in the organisation between those who want KONP to be beefed up and play more of a coordinating role, and those who want to stick with the “federal” model of (an insufficient number of) local groups.

Workers’ Liberty members attended both the KONP AGM and the public conference. We argued for more pressure on the Labour Party to commit to reversing the Health and Social Care Act should it win the next election. We encouraged activists not to wait for KONP, but to support the new NHS Liaison Network and to urge KONP to participate.

We promoted the lobby of Labour Party conference in Manchester on Sunday 30 September called by the NHS Liaison Committee, North West Region of Unite the Union, and Wirral TUC.

Saturday’s conferences underlined the urgent need for a bigger coordination of efforts, with resources particularly from Unison and Unite, the main unions representing workers.

Although these two unions supported the conference, they had not mobilised their members to attend.

At the KONP AGM, campaigners expressed their anger with the unions and Labour at not leading a bigger fight against the Bill. We must continue to push Labour and the unions to act.
FEATURE

What are the stakes in the eurozone crisis policy?

John Grahl (Professor of European Integration at Middlesex University) spoke to Martin Thomas.

What is likely to come out of the 28 June EU summit?

There is not likely to be much movement. There may be some acceptance of moving towards a banking union. It would isolate the problem of instability and possible insolvency of banks from the financial problems of the member states. Whether Germany is prepared to move fast on this I don’t know, but it seems to be what the European Commission and some of the member states will be pushing for.

Even if the summit decides for a banking union, the timing of getting that up is much longer than the timescale of the crisis.

On the basis of an agreement in principle to go for a banking union it is necessary to increase the room for manoeuvre for the European Central Bank or at least the stability funds. If the eurozone can say it is going for a general regime of centralised recapitalisation of banks that are in trouble, it could start doing some of it now. Or a reasonably decisive agreement on moving towards a banking union might change market sentiment. Suppose you had a two-year horizon, then even an insolvent bank that could secure funds elsewhere might be secured against recapitalisation.

There may be other moves at the summit — something towards eurobonds and mutualisation of some of the government debt — but resistance to those seems stronger than to a banking union. Anything worthy of the name of fiscal union beyond the horizon at present.

But the period of apparent success for the EU’s bank-aid measures is becoming shorter and shorter.

Germany can’t manage with an obligation to offer 6% interest even when its government borrows, though the time horizon of its debt also matters, and there isn’t an immediate emergency there. The talk was before the Greek election that the Greek government would need money quite soon, but presumably that money will now be found. But it’s true: the inadequacy of the measures is revealed at a more and more rapid rate.

It looks as if the leading EU governments still think that they can hold firm and get through without a crisis.

How would a break happen? The most concrete thinking I’ve seen on that is from John Dizard in the Financial Times (18 June). He says that a member state could invoke Article 55, which appeals to the EU for capital control. Other states would be reluctant to see that, especially if it was one of the “good pupils” doing it. There might be an attempt to refinancing the country rather than seeing it pass capital controls. I don’t know how that would be done, but Angela Merkel has changed her mind in the past. The real impediments are political, not financial. It’s a question of how much will there is to keep the show on the road.

Fine Barclays? Expropriate the bankers!

“It’s quite hard to think of behaviour by a bank as shocking as this”, commented BBC business editor Robert Peston as Barclays Bank was fined £290 million on 27 June for dishonestly manipulating the interest rates used for short-term bank-to-bank loans, Libor and Euribor.

Why so shocking? It seems technical and abstruse. Libor and Euribor, published each morning by a committee of banks, are official estimates of the borrowings at one interest rate and lending at a higher one of the leading banks. Libor and Euribor thus corrupts the entire global financial system. And it can be done only by central people at a bank. This is not a “rogue trader” thing. The Barclays fine is a pay-off to avoid further investigation. No individual has been brought to court or jailed. Maybe 20 other banks are being investigated.

The people who manipulated Libor and Euribor have vanished into the tax havens to scan governments and decide which investments are funded. They can’t be trusted with that power.

The Labour front bench demanded only that “Treas- ury Ministers now review the regulation of LIBOR arrangements”.

Interest rate manipulation should demand the expropriation of high finance and its reorganisation into a public banking, pensions, and insurance service under democratic and workers’ control.

Germany is still heavily committed to the eurozone.

I suspect there is probably still a strong will in Germany to save the eurozone.

The FT has reported an estimate of the immediate, first-order costs of a break-up of the eurozone, which would be 10 to 13% of output for countries across the EU. It is a big shock. You could imagine Greece being suspended, Portugal, Spain, and Italy for a lot less than 10% of eurozone output. It seems that the bank crisis that we used to think it would be the EU states more money to crush the Greeks than to assist them. The losses on a comprehensive Greek default would be so much that the euro area would need very big fiscal stimulus.

What’s your opinion of Syriza’s programme?

Very much worried by it, but not sure it will happen on 7 June and that the Greeks will fight openly for an abrogation of the bailout terms. I understand why Greeks voted otherwise, but I see a risk of trouble.

Syriza was going to suspend some aspects of the bailout agreement. Some of the draconian cuts were going to be sus- pended or reversed. I don’t know whether they were going to try to keep servicing the debt.

The primary deficit of Greece [the shortfall of government income from government spending, excluding debt pay- ments] does not look that terrifying. It’s maybe two or three per cent of GDP, and in an emergency any government can find 2% of GDP, especially if it has popular support. A special wealth tax would be the best way, but there are others.

The real danger would, perhaps, be the government becoming unable to finance its current expenditure, but a banking collapse — that a Greek government would face comprehensive banking failure because nobody would de- posit with or lend money to the Greek banking system.

Of course, Syriza is an alliance of disparate forces. The people I know in Syriza mainly have a background from the Communist Party (Interior). But Syriza includes other forces, some of them, probably, more combative than Syrnanists.

One analyst has said that the European Central Bank would respond to a Syriza government by cutting Greece off from the Target 2 payment system, with the effect that euros inside Greece would become invalid for payments outside Greece.

Yes. That or less. Or that’s also with what John Dizard has written in the Financial Times. You would have euros trapped in the Greek banking system, which could be used only for transactions within Greece with someone else who has a Greek bank account.

It would be a sort of dual currency system, but you could have an objective, or a programme, for restoring the connec- tion.

Cutting off Greece from the euro payments system would require a high-profile political decision by the Euro- pean Central Bank, which is supposed to be inde- pendent of national governments. The ECB will and one organisation, there would be large scope for a campaign to stop the cutting-off.

Gage, and you’d have to say, a danger to us whatever you face.

The theory was that the European Central Bank would keep in the background — regulate inflation, and that was all. Here it is already involved in high-profile politi- cal decisions, and possibly involved in more. Some mainstream writers have said that this shows that the major “independent” central bank has failed; but it is a very extreme model. Everywhere else you have central banks that are independent of government but not independent of politics.

The European model of an “independent” central bank has failed; but it is a very extreme model. Everywhere else you have central banks that are independent of government but not independent of politics.

The euro is an example of a “monetarist” regime. Paul Volcker had to get the money supply under control. He had to get the money supply under control. In the autumn of 1979.

Volcker was reporting this as a triumph. But that was the European Central Bank, which is supposed to be independent, did not have monetary policy in a desperate situation. It was in a panic and thought it would be a sort of dual currency system; but you could have an objective, or a programme, for restoring the connection.

Cutting off Greece from the euro payments system would require a high-profile political decision by the Euro- 10 SOLIDARITY
The truth is probably more prosaic. The WRP had been living beyond its means for some time, maintaining an HQ, a chain of bookshops, a school, a printshop, and a number of youth centres, as well as satisfying Healy’s obsession with creating a potential opposition to the party’s ultra-leftism. The similarity with the method of Stalinist anti-fascism in the 1930s is striking. There are huge gaps in the narrative. The expulsion of up to 200 supporters of Alan Thornett in 1974, which destroyed a large part of the WRP’s industrial base, doesn’t rate a mention. A whole chapter is devoted to the WRP’s libel action against the Ohmberger, but he doesn’t refer to its long-running litigation against Socialist Orient: Apart from cursory references to the 1984-5 miners’ strike, the great industrial battles of the 1970s and 80s and the riots of 1981 and 1985 barely feature.

CHAOTIC

After Thornett’s expulsion, the WRP’s industrial work was chaotic. In truth, the WRP leadership instinctively feared organised trade union work because it might create a potential opposition to the party’s ultra-leftism. It preferred working with impressionable actors, inexperienced youth and the permanently unemployed, while keeping a relationship with left-leaning trade union leaders.

In spite of official disinterest I succeeded in building the organisation’s most effective industrial group in London’s largest health authority. In the middle of the 1982 NHS dispute I gave an enthusiastic report in which I mentioned how the dispute had united many different types of people in the pyramid of nations that made up the NHS in those days. Mitchell moved a motion of censure on the grounds that there were no differences between the different groups and nationalities. They were all workers, and therefore my remarks were objectively racist!

Similarly, the WRP’s behind the scenes “alliances” with various nationalist movements could be a minefield for members. In 1979 I was put on the standing orders committee at the WRP Young Socialists conference and made the mistake of putting a fraternal speaker from Robert Mugabe’s ZANU on ahead of one from Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU. Mitchell came up to me furiously and punched me on the arm for breaching etiquette.

Mitchell never had much grasp of either Marxism or Trotskyist history. Having been catapulted into the leadership, his relationship with Marxism was mediated through the person of Gerry Healy.

But having had a quarter of a century to reflect, he’s no
How Greek Trotskyism was born

Our Movement

In an ongoing series, Liam McNulty pays tribute to some of the heroes of revolutionary socialism. This week, he examines the political life of Greek Trotskyist leader Pan dellos Pouliopoulos. 

Pandellos Pouliopoulos (1900-43) was the first general secretary of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and a founder of the Trotskyist movement in Greece.

As a young law student, Pouliopoulos joined the Socialist Labour Party of Greece (SEK), the forerunner to the KKE, in 1919. The following year he was conscripted to fight in the Greek-Turkish war and was arrested in the final year of the conflict in 1922 for anti-war activity.

In 1924 Pouliopoulos was KKE delegate to the Fifth Congress of the Comintern and later that year became general secretary of the party. He came to prominence when, along with 23 others, he was tried in Athens and exiled for pronouncing "anti-Stalinist" statements.

Other parts of the WRP's internal regime and politics were also fortified during the third period Stalinism, with the leadership of the party's Central Committee. He soon formed an oppositional journal called Xekinima (New Beginning). He correctly recordsthat the anti-Healy majority carried thebanner of the Fourth International.

The WRP reacted with the social-patriotic slogan of "liberation of the Nation from the foreign yoke." Pouliopoulos called instead for a dual revolutionary struggle against the occupation and for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government in Greece.

In 1938, after going into hiding, Pouliopoulos had been arrested by the Metaxas dictatorship and imprisoned in Aegina. He refused to kneel before the dictatorship or sign a declaration of repentance allowing him to flee abroad, declaring that "they can only take me alive in chains, and even then I will find a way to return."

On 9 June 1943, he was executed by Italian occupiers.

CRIMINAL

Spartacus refused to join with the Archeio-Marxists. However, the historic defeat of the German workers' movement in 1933 partly due to the criminal policies of the Stalinists, led Leon Trotsky to raise the banner of a new Fourth International.

At the same time, the Archeio-Marxist leader Dimitris Giotopoulos fell out with Trotsky and his group became affiliated with the centrist "London Bureau."

The WRP group foused with another tendency to form the Organisation of Communist Internationals of Greece (OKDI). In 1944, Soviet policies of adherence to Trotskyism on account of its shallow roots in the working class and particularly the split between the Archeio-Marxists, who were increasingly Trotskyist in orientation and were gaining influence in the trade unions.

Healy speaking at a WRP rally commemorating the murder of Leon Trotsky

Healy's political life

Pouliopoulos was tried in Athens and exiled for pronouncing "anti-Stalinist" statements. He also had split with the KKE in the early 1920s. Pouliopoulos and his group, which after December 1928 was publishing a journal called Spartacus, argued for the need to reconstitute the KKE in accordance with ideas influenced by the Trotskyist International Left Opposition (ILO).

However, the ILO believed that the KKE was not the most promising source of adherents to Trotskyism on account of its shallow roots in the working class and particularly its split with the Archeio-Marxists, who were increasingly Trotskyist in orientation and were gaining influence in the trade unions.

What is capitalisim?

Can it last?

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What economic factors might have contributed to the split within the party? How did these factors influence the decision to separate from the KKE and form the ILO?
December 1944: when Greek Stalinists murdered hundreds of Trotskyists

In December 1944, the Stalinists in Greece massacred several hundred Trotskyists, anarchists and other internationalists from Thessaly and Macedonia. During the winter of 1943, the revolutionary dynamic of the Greek movement against German occupation, paving the way for the conservative-led White Terror of 1945-6, which was backed by British troops in Greece and led directly to the Greek Civil War from March 1946. Liam McNally looks at the background.

German forces invaded Greece on 6 April 1941. Athens fell by 27 April and, by the end of the month, the German campaign claimed victory with the capture of Kalamata in the Peloponnese.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), like other Communist Parties, had been in a state of confusion about its attitude to the Nazis, in the period following the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939. All that changed after the Nazis opened hostilities against the USSR with Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. The KKE was ready to stand squarely behind the Allied side. On 27 September, the Seventh Plenum of the KKE formed a popular front for the liberation of the country, the National Liberation Front (EAM), along with a number of other minor parties. Leftist parties represented the KKE, with Christos Chomenidis from the Socialist Party (SKE), Ilias Tsirimokos from the Union for People’s Democracy (ELD) and Apostolos Voiatzis from the Agricultural Party of Greece (AKE).

On 20 October EAM published a social-patriotic manifesto calling for the “liberation of the Nation from foreign yoke” and the “guaranteeing of the Greek people’s sovereign right to determine its form of government.” However, as Pierre Broué has written: “This desire to maintain a ‘united nation’ against the invaders — when it was not united — and to ignore in silence the class sources of the popular opposition to the occupiers and to the members of the Greek bourgeoisie who collaborated with them, did not, however, succeed in preventing the workers and the poorest strata of the people from laying hold of the foundation of the organisation which the KKE offered. They instinctively used it to fight for their demands. The influx of fighters a working class character to the EAM, which was doing so much to reject it.”

By 1942, EAM had its own popular militia, the Greek People’s Liberation Army (ELAS). ELAS fought the German and Bulgarian occupiers and in November 1941 carried out one of the largest acts of sabotage in occupied Europe in the Second World War when, along with the National Republican Greek League (EDES) and British agents, it attacked the Italian garrison and destroyed the Gorgopotamos bridge.

Such spectaculars strengthened ELAS and it spread through the Greek countryside, including to territories such as Crete and Eastern Greece. In 1943, large mountainous regions of central Greece passed from Axis control to ELAS and the EAM became the largest mass political organisation in Greek history, with 1.5 million members and 150,000 partisans. By 10 March, EAM-ELAS controlled most of the country and established the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA), often referred to as “the Mountain Government”, which declared both the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo and the collaborationist administration in Athens. What gave EAM its base, which far exceeded that of the small KKE, was the spontaneous mass movement of Greek workers and peasants which spread across the country during the occupation.

Workers demonstrated in their thousands on 18 October 1941, the first anniversary of the initial Italian invasion, and throughout the winter and the following spring were joined by students and by wounded war veterans. On 15 March 1942 there were strikes in several cities, including Athens, which were followed by a strike of 40,000 civil servants led by Trotskyist militants.

On 25 June 1943 there was a general strike against the Axis forces and also hoped to undermine the government. The ‘Red Belt’, the workers’ quarters around Athens, were nothing less than fortresses of the armed people.” Although this explosion of workers’ struggle, the KKE led a workers’ kickback in 1942-3.

Despite this explosion of workers’ struggle, the KKE leadership of EAM denied the class character of the movement and insisted on its purely national basis. It announced that the “KKE supports by all possible means the struggle for national liberation, and will do all in its power to help gather all the patriotic forces into one unbreakable national front, which will unite the whole people to shake off the foreign yoke and to win national liberation at the side of our great Allies.”

RULING CLASS
The ruling-class had no such illusions in national unity. Elements of the officer corps of the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo, under the protection of Winston Churchill, grouped together their own forces, linked to the military hierarchy and the secret services, and organised a counter-attack. They tried to organise non-Communist nationalist guerrillas to fight the Axis forces and also hoped to undermine ELAS. One British Special Operations Executive, agent, Eddie Myers, recorded being told by his superiors in April 1943 that “the Cairo authorities consider that after the liberation of Greece, civil war is almost inevitable.”

That year Ioannis Rallis, who was in close contact with the British secret service, became the Prime Minister of occupied Greece, and with British help took steps to curb the popular movement. It was with these forces, backed by British imperialism, that the KKE sought “unity.”

In October 1944 Stalin held talks with Churchill at the Fourth Moscow Conference, where they reached the cynical “percentages agreement” to divide spheres of influence in the region. The Comintern had been dissolved in May 1943 and replaced by self-consciously more “diplomatic” Cominform. Stalin agreed to give Churchill a free hand in Greece without any guarantee for greater Russian influence in other countries.

In April 1944, the Cairo government was entrusted to Georgios Papandreou, who pressed the EAM leaders to sign the Lebanon Charter on 30 May, which denounced ELAS “terrorism” and agreed to unite the Greek armed forces under government control “alongside the Allied troops.” The KKE was unhappy but a Soviet mission led by Georgy Malenkov, denouncing the agreement as a betrayal. They was isolated by the party who denied them permission to leave Greece, and had their influence in June 1945 by pro-government paramilitaries, possibly with KKE collusion. If revolts at the universities had not suffered enough repression from the Axis occupation, the Greek government and British imperialism, they had the KKE to reckon with. In an article reviewing Stalinist conditions during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9), the Stalinists backed the forces of “Loyalists” despite having an influential position at the head of a popular movement which revolutionary potential. Just as in Spain, they also extended the methods of the Russian secret service to the collaborationist movement, forming the Organization for the Protection of the People’s Struggle (OPLA), which was accountable directly to the International Communist Union (KDKE). Its ostensible role was to protect ELAS and track down collaborators but it served a sinister purpose.

Before and during the “December Events” the OPLA murdered revolutionary opponents of the KKE, particularly Trotskyists, but also of other longstanding Greek revolutionary group, briefly associated with the Trotskyist opposition and anarchists. “We killed more than 800 Trotskyists”, boasted KKE Politibureau member Barzotin. In the period before December, Loukas Karliotis (“Kostas Kastritis”), the secretary of the United Trotskyist organisations, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. Many more were not so lucky.

Amongst those murdered by the Stalinists included the whole Archeomarxist group in Agrinio, and cadres from the Opposition faction of the KKE. According to the members of one-time Trotskyist Agis Stinas, they murdered the leading Trotskyists Dimosthes Vousoukis, a member of the Organisation of International Communists (OKDE) and later of the International Communist Union (KDKE), “one of the most devoted, active and competent militants, and one of the best trained, an escapee from [the prison of war camp] Acharnena.”

Broué writes that “throughout the country OPLA agents abducted, tortured and murdered such militants as Stavros Vernos, the Secretary of the Association of the War Wounded, and Thanas Kostos, a former Secretary of the Communist Youth at Chios. Workers, dockers, metal work- ers and teachers all suffered alike.”

The murder of genuine revolutionaries by the Stalinist forces during the Greek struggle for liberation was the horrific extension of the KKE’s counter-revolutionary policies, with the effect it brought to the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Long transformed into an instrument of Kremlin diplomatic intrigue, the Stalinists retained their role as border guards for the new Russian empire and the “sympaths of the working class movement.”

More on our website:
Stalinists smear AWL on Palestine: an exchange of letters

On 22 May, the Morning Star, newspaper of the Stuart Communist Party of Britain, printed an article of Colin Shindler’s book Israel and the European left. The reviewer included an attack on passing on the AWL, “in exchange of an exchange of letters. The attacks on us are clearly attempts to hide the real dividing lines on the left through propaganda.” Judge for yourself at: www.workersliberty.org/node/19045

KKE headquarters in 1944

One ELAS leader, a member of the KKE Central Committee, Aris Veloschitz, denounced the agreement as a betrayal. He was isolated by the party who refused him permission to leave Greece, and had his influence in June 1945 by pro-government paramilitaries, possibly with KKE collusion.

As revolutionaries had not suffered enough repression from the Axis occupation, the Greek government and British imperialism, they had the KKE to reckon with. In an article reviewing Stalinist conditions during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9), the Stalinists backed the forces of “Loyalists” despite having an influential position at the head of a popular movement which revolutionary potential. Just as in Spain, they also extended the methods of the Russian special service to the collaborationist movement, forming the Organization for the Protection of the People’s Struggle (OPLA), which was accountable directly to the International Communist Union (KDKE). Its ostensible role was to protect ELAS and track down collaborators but it served a sinister purpose.

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Greek revolution.
Debating the SWP on Egypt?

The Left

By Mark Osborn

GLOBAL, IMPERSONAL, UNCARING, RUDELESS AND DIVISIVE... FRAGILE

Global
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

Impersonal
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

Uncaring
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

Rudeless
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

Divisive
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

Fragile
A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.

AWL activists have been leafleting SWP meetings to try to engage SWP members over their organisation's support for a vote for the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian presidential elections. Generally we found SWP members unwilling to discuss. If a debate had taken place it might have looked like this:

SWP: Fundamentally you are sectarianists. You intend to turn your backs on the mass of workers who are following the Muslim Brothers.

The Brothers got 10 million votes in the parliamentary elections in December 2011. Yes, the leaders are well-off, but the rank and file are the same as elsewhere in the world. The Egyptian example, of course, the big majority of workers voted for the Brothers or the salafist party Nour. We need to win the workers and to do that we need to get close to them, link up with them and talk to them.

AWL: Can you do that and link up? You’re addressing this as an organisational matter, as if all we need is a bus ticket to Alexandria. Talk to them? Of course, but what should we talk about?

We shouldn’t “follow the workers” irrespective of what “the workers” are actually doing. We don’t want to “ignore” the workers who follow the Brothers, but it is necessary to tell workers the truth: this party will lead you to a disaster! Workers have their own interests, distinct from the right-wing religious sectarian, pro-market millionaires and professionals who follow the Brotherhood.

By endorsing the Brothers you are turning your backs on other workers — those who are rightly alarmed by the Brothers as well as women, Christians, young liberals, trade unionists and leftists who is for democracy! The MB’s support peaked in December 2011, millions have turned away from them — our job is to energize that movement towards us.

SWP: If you fail to back a vote for the Brothers you will never get a hearing from the many millions that still follow them. We have not dropped a single criticism of them. That is not necessary. We have made no political concession.

AWL: Advocating a vote for them is a political concession! It means taking some responsibility for them. At some level you are recommending them to the workers.

COMMON
You say you are “not the counter-revolution”, but “the right wing of the revolution”. You advocate that the left and the MB agree on a common immediate programme.

SWP: They are preferable to the tired, corrupt old regime.

Is that true? Our slogan is the old communist one: “march separately and strike together”.

AWL: That useful idea is rewritten by you as “march behind, help them strike for what they want.”

“March separately, strike together” is the idea behind the workers’ united front. It is a joke to use it here, now, with the clerical right-wing MB. During the election campaign they presented themselves as pro-market, overtly Islamic, devout.

SWP: Well, what do you expect? Most Egyptians are devout. Simply denouncing religious parties and Islam will get you nowhere. We need to be sensitive to religious sensibilities. The MB is the right wing of those people who want to continue the revolution against the old regime. Given the choice of only two candidates a vote for them is a rough expression of opposition to the old regime. We have to relate to that. Moreover the attempted on-going “slow” coup by the army makes this more important. Right now, on the streets, it is for the military! Or for democracy and the people’s choice, the Brothers?

AWL: What about “for the revolution”? The Brothers sat on the sidelines while the youth fought in the streets against Mubarak. The political benefits of that fight have, unfortunately, fallen into their laps. The aim of socialist activity is to make workers’ liberty a possibility and a political collapse in front of people who are hostile to workers’ liberty will not do that.

No-one advocates headlines on all socialist propaganda: “Down with Islam!” Equally, we are secular Marxists, and it would be better if you remembered that and were more cautious about your political bedfellows.

Let’s accept that the Brothers are “making a revolution”. This is their revolution, which is both against the army, and simultaneously against — the left, the workers, the feminists.

SWP: Reformists always compromise and often let others do their fighting. We must be there to point out to the poor and the youth that follow the MB that they should be pursuing a resolute struggle against the army and old regime. The MB took a turn after the book 9/11, by Sadiq Qutb, was published in the mid-60s. They stopped seeing the only enemy as imperialism, and attacked the local state directly. Thousands of young radicals were inspired.

AWL: Yes, but inspired to do what, exactly? You are relating to them like they were the first Labour Party, which is absurd. They are not a sort of working-class or social-democratic party.

SWP: Your argument has become even weaker as the military have begun to move against the Brothers and against democracy. Socialist, defend the MB against the military and defend the right of the MB to take power after winning a majority in an election. Let’s put them to the test. When the MB take people out onto the streets in self-defence we must be with them, against the military. Or would you stand on the sidelines while the military take full control again?

AWL: If big, popular mobilisations against the military threat take place, led by the MB, socialists would take part. We’d intervene, organise our own contingents, organise our own initiatives. Attempt to rally the workers and poor not just against the military but for democracy, women’s and workers’ rights. We would aim to rally people not just against the military, but for positive, socialist demands.

SWP: And you fail to understand the potentially anti-imperialist nature of the Islamic movement. The Islamic Brotherhood is the control of the US embassy. The Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine have played a key role in the armed struggle against Israel. The Algerian FIS organised huge demonstrations against the first US war against Iraq.

AWL: Before coming to power they said he was for democracy, women’s rights as well as against imperialism. He destroyed democracy and tramplled on women’s freedom.

KILL
Anti-imperialism is not enough. You need to know what a political group is for. You fail to understand the counter-revolutionary role of Islamism. These forces will smash us and kill us if they can.

SWP: The job is also to relate to the radicals amongst the Islamists. In the Pyramids protest Chris Harman wrote, “As with any ‘petty bourgeois utopia’ its supporters are faced with a choice between heroic but futile attempts to impose it in opposition to those who run existing society, or compromising with them, providing an ideological veneer to continuing oppression and exploitation. It is this which leads inevitably to splits between a radical, terrorist wing of Islamism on the one hand, and a more moderate wing on the other.”

AWL: So Harman thought that the radicals, involved in actual ‘resistance’ were a threat to the reformist Islamists? Hasn’t this nonsense been ended by 9/11?

This is another example of the SWP becoming mesmerised by “militancy” rather than asking what a particular political force positively stands for. Look at Hamas — the Brotherhood’s sister party — in Gaza. Sure, they oppose the Israeli government — but in their own way, for their own revolutionary reasons. In Gaza, they have smashed the ap- pointed secularism, enforced backward dress codes on women, created a one-party religious state. The Islamists’ revolution against the state and imperialism is both partial and — more to the point — against us (the left, the unions, women, religious minorities, lesbians and gay men) too.

SWP: Yes but, as Harman also said, “On some issues we will find ourselves on the same side as the Islamists against imperialism and the state. This was true, for instance, in many countries during the second Gulf War. It should be true in countries like France or Britain when it comes to combating racism. Where the Islamists are in opposition, our rule should be, ‘with the Islamists sometimes, with the state never’.”

AWL: This is sloppy. If the fascists attack a mosque, for example, the socialist left will be with the Muslim self-de- fence. It might be necessary to conclude a practical agree- ment with the Mosque leaders — even Islamists — to that end. However, we are never “with the Islamists” in politics or ideas.

And by the way, Harman also wrote this: “But socialists cannot give support to the Islamists either. That would be to call into being the swapping of one form of oppression for another, where the former becomes a substitute for the latter, to react to the violence of the state by abandoning the de- fense of ethnic and religious minorities, women and gays, to collude in scapegoating that makes it possible for capitalist exploitation to continue unchecked providing it takes ‘Islam- ist’ identities.”

It would be to abandon the goal of independent socialist politics, based on workers in struggle organising all the oppressed and exploited behind the MB for a socialist, anti-imperialist, anti-religious, anti-bourgeois combination which can only succeed in its own terms.

So even Harman was against what the SWP is saying now!
Workers in various London transport companies and grades are planning industrial action as unionism brings long-term bargaining demands to a head.

For London Underground service control members (signal operators, line controllers, etc) have won some important demands for job security and a planned three-day strike will not now go ahead.

The company intended to use the opening of the new hammer smith service control Centre in 2015 as a pretext to keep the staff they wanted and ditch those they did not, and to reshape the service control function in a way that eliminated effective trade unionism.

RMT demanded — and was disappointed in career paths, lifetime movements. Service control workers will now keep their rate of pay (and pension) permanently even if they are displaced into a lower grade.

A service control RMT rep told solidarity, “Service control workers across London Underground have shown their solidarity and support to each other by gaining a tremendous victory against a bid by the union.”

With just a month until the olympics start, talks between transport employers and unions have reached end-game, it is time to either fight for more or accept what is on offer.

**Demand**

“There can be no doubt that London Underground saw no alternative but to give in to our demands when they realised that managers could not carry out their threats. The company decided to give in on a daily basis when we announced a three-day strike.”

Meanwhile, Aslef has abandoned its bid for the reinstatement of piccadilly line driver charlie sayvain, who london underground sacked after he made a driving error. A planned one-day strike on the line would have been supported by members of RMT as well as Aslef, but the company called it off for what seems to be a relatively small payout for Charlie. A piccadilly line driver told solidarity, “Most drivers on the line feel that Charlie has been badly let down. His union has not run much of a campaign, in contrast to the successful RMT campaign last year which won the reinstatement of eastman london station staff.”

With just a month until the olympics start, talks between transport employers and unions have reached end-game, it is time to either fight for more or accept what is on offer.

**Bonuses**

RMT has reached agreement with several companies, which will see members receive bonuses of several hundred pounds a year.

“Companies we include agreed changes to working arrangements, others (such as London Underground) preserve agreements.”

But London Underground could still face industrial action during the olympics, as RMT ballots members to refuse to cooperate with the company’s discretionary policy of counting “ICsAs” (admin staff in high-visibility vests) towards the minimum number of staff required to be on duty on a station for it to stay open safely. And RMT members on Transport for London will strike for one day starting with the night shifts on Sunday 1 July, as TIL refuses to pay an Olympic bonus to many staff and is restricting annual pay.

The union is also balloting members on First Great Western, Greater Anglia, south west trains, the London cycle hire scheme, three cleaning companies (ISS, Initial and Carlisle) and two engineering contractors for strike action to demand a decent offer for working arrangements and financial rewards during the olympics. Janine Booth, London Transport representative on RMT’s National Executive, said, “After years of privatisation, the transport industry and its workforce are fragmented. But RMT is looking at co-ordinating these disputes, which will give us union strength and power, and we support and feel boosted by Unite’s action on London buses too.”

“The with the revolting spectacle of corporate snouts in the olympic trough, transport workers deserve decent compensation for the hard work and demands of the olympic games, without having to sacrifice hard-won working conditions.”

Unite in pro-europe vote

The policy conference of the Unite union has passed a motion supporting European unity and opposing calls for Britain to withdraw from the EU.

Although far from perfect, the motion represents a definite break with the Stalinists who were pushing for the union to take a left-nationalist position on the European question.

The conference also saw a heated debate on the union’s relation to the labour party.

Doctors consider next steps

Over 1,000 operations and 7,000 appointments were cancelled on Thursday 21 June, as industrial action by the British Medical Association (BMA) made an impact. 60% of GPs’ surgeries in Scotland were affected by the action, where 3,600 procedures were cancelled.

The BMA’s annual conference, currently taking place in Bournemouth, will discuss the effectiveness of the action and the association’s next steps.

A spokesperson said: “We have not been willing to return to talks, but it is the Government that has failed to turn to the table to negotiate on the detail of the pension changes.”

Firefighters discuss cuts battles

By jack Bradley

The fire brigades union (fBU) met in Blackpool last week (with one exception) in a fairly quiescent special conference, with the union’s executive council canvassing all the motions it proposed.

Delegates discussed the continued loss of front line firefighter jobs – over a thousand a year — and the impact those would have on emergency fire cover in local communities. There are a number of local disputes brewing over cuts. The union announced for dates five strikes in Essex, starting from 28 June in a long running dispute about cuts to the service.

The threat from privatisation and “mutuals” was also debated. Parts of the fire service, such as the London fire and ambulance service in Hammersmith and Clyde have already been privatised.

But firefighters are striking for the fire service college and setting up mutuals to fragment the service in Humberside and Cleveland. The union is launching a campaign to defend a publicly owned fire service.

Pay and pensions were also debated. Fire service employees have refused to make a pay offer in recent years, effectively imposing the pay freeze.

The FBU is slightly out of synch with other unions on pensions, having had smaller contribution increases in April and some still-ongoing negotiations around the final scheme, which was not finalised.

The conference voted for financial action on both issues if acceptable settlements were not reached, but did not set dates for action, which some RMTs pushed for.

The conference had one international debate, on whether to sever ties with the international federation Histadrut, arising from last year’s conference. Delegates voted narrowly for the execu- tive’s recommendation to continue to criticise and engage with Histadrut, which includes israeli firefighters. The resolution also endorsed a policy of one state for two peoples, which the FBU has backed before.

Chief constable for class politics and conscience democracy over the anti-jewish revanchism of the boycotters.

POLARISED

The most polarised decision was on the union reorganisation. The FBU has been squeezed by falling membership, although its membership remains high. The executive proposed re- dunging employed staff, cutting staff numbers and pay measures mainly affecting the bureaucracy of the union.

This included removing the women’s, black and LGBT reps from the executive. Whilst the changes do reduce equality voices on the top table and votes in regional and brigade conferences, they do not affect equality committee, schools or other activities.

The conference voted for the union to en- sure the FBU survives as an independent, industrial union. Some delegates argued that the union’s concentration on the union’s democracy and equality represen- tation.
London bus strike: “About more than the Olympics”

An east London bus driver spoke to Solidarity about the London-wide strike (22 June) for bonuses for Olympics working.

This strike is about much more than the Olympics. The Olympics bonus is the immediate issue, but the strike (22 June) for people who voted yes to this bonus because we ‘refed down. We’ve had attacks on working paymen ts we’ve faced over the past few years.

We’ve had our Sunday working payments reduced. We’ve had attacks on our working time. It used to be you were entitled to a ninety-minute paid meal break, and if you came back late you could still take it. That’s gone now; if you come back late, your meal break gets knocked off.

Finishes are getting later and later. It’s not like working in an office or a factory, where you can just walk away at finishing time. If I’m stuck in traffic on Oxford Street at my finishing time, I can’t just leave the bus.

At my garage, our staff pay has been cut away, which makes it very difficult for us to get to work, especially if we’re on an early start. If we leave an early start for the garage, and we can’t drive to work because there’s nowhere to park, how are we supposed to get in at three in the morning?

People are saying that this strike is last-minute, but it’s not; negotiations have been going on for nine months, so management has had nearly a year to sort this issue out.

Buses are using the recession as a cover to attack us, but it’s not as if we’re workers in a factory where production has dropped because of an economic collapse. People are actually using the bus more during the recession, because it’s a cheaper form of transport. Our workload has gone up and our bosses are making more money.

Transport for London is desperate to make as much revenue as they can, so they’ve got revenue inspectors on buses really scrutinising people’s tickets. As drivers, we only get a flash of a travel card or a ticket, so we can’t be expected to catch all the people who are travelling on expired or invalid tickets. Revenue inspectors get a good long look, and then book the drivers for failing to catch it. It’s all about generating as much money as they can, even if it means penalising workers.

This strike has shown people that we can come together and take action. That in itself will give people confidence. People are not going to dig in over this one and see it as a key into the wider issues.

I’ve worked here for 16 years, and for the first 14 years I was never involved in strike action. If you’d have told me during those fourteen years that bus workers could come out and strike, I wouldn’t have believe you. But once you’re done it, you know it can be done.

Flying pickets cause rush-hour chaos

On the morning of Wednesday 27 June, Unite activists mounted flying pickets at six garages across London. The garages were operated by companies which injunctioned the strike.

The pickets completely shut the garages down, and no buses ran between 6-8am.

The message to bus bosses was: if you prevent your workers from exercising their democratic right to strike, we’ll prevent your buses from moving.

Hospitals go bust

By Gerry Bates

South London Healthcare NHS Trust has become the first NHS trust to be placed in “special measures” after racking up a deficit of £150 million. The Trust will now be run by insolvency administrators who will be free to impose “whatever it takes” to get the Trust back in the black. That means cuts in services.

Trafford General in Manchester is to close because managers say its finances are “unviable”.

Many other Trusts and hospitals will find themselves or have already got in the same “financially unviable”.

In the case of South London Healthcare Trust this is the result of having to service the huge costs of Private Finance Initiative schemes.

If the government does not bail out these hospitals the NHS will no longer be able to provide a comprehensive service. Health activists, trade unionists and activists need to sound the alarm.

• More on pages 8-9

Spanish miners are striking for us all

By John Cunningham, Spanish Miners’ Solidarity Committee (personal capacity)

After a serious of localised industrial actions, Spanish coal miners, in the main mining regions of Asturias and Castille and León, went on indefinite strike on 29 May. This is their response to the announcement by the right wing government of Mariano Rajoy that sub-sidies to the coal mining regions will be massively cut, in effect announcing his intention to close down the industry.

The cuts mean the end of the remaining 8,000 miners’ jobs, with another 30,000 jobs affected indirectly. Many of the mining communities, particularly in the mountainous border region between Asturias and Castille and León, where they are geographically very isolated, will be wiped out.

The miners’ unions, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT), are united in their response, and the strike is 100% solid, energetically supported by their communities. Even the local police are friendly.

Groups of miners at Cadí, Santín, Cruz, and elsewhere, have organised ‘stay down’ strikes at some localities occupied by local government offices. There have been numerous demonstrations by and in support of the miners and “symbolic” miners have regularly blocked various motorways in the region.

The Government has sent in the leashed Civil Guard, who appear to be totally ineffective in responding to the miners’ hit and run guerrilla tactics. On occasions they have coerced their anger and frustrated miners on ending villages. On one occasion they fired rubber bullets into a group of miners and their children gathered outside a village school.

On 18 June the miners’ unions called a regional general strike which was strongly supported in both Asturias and Castille and León. A few days later the women of the mining regions descended on the Senate building in Madrid for a mass strike by women and their families in support of the miners and their families. On Saturday 22 June a housing union mounted a “Black March” to Madrid, where they will eventually camp out in front of the government buildings.

This could be a long strike, and for the Spanish miners to win it is essential that they receive our support. This is not a small localised dispute. The Spanish miners are the first major group of workers in the whole of Europe to go on indefinite strike against the neo-liberal austerity measures being inflicted on millions across the continent.

Nor should it be forgotten that in the British miners’ strike of 1984-5 Spanish miners were generous in their support and solidarity. It is now time to stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

To this end a Spanish Miners’ Solidarity Committee (SMSC) has been formed in the UK by ex-miners and other sympathisers and trade unionists. The Honorary Chair is Tony Lawson, the ex-National President of the NUM and now a Labour MP; the work of the committee is also supported by the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign and Chris Kitchen, the present National Secretary of the NUM. The RMT has announced its support, along with the TUC General Council, and among many messages of support has been one from filmmaker Ken Loach.

Two members of the SMSC visited Spain very recently to discuss how help could be best organised and to spread the message that the Spanish miners are not standing alone. The SMSC has been recognised by the CCOO and UGT, and a bank account is in the process of being set up, able to channel funds to the striking miners and their families. It is hoped that a delegation of striking miners will be able to visit the UK shortly.

Please help support the Spanish miners by sending a donation to the solidarity fund. At the moment we can only accept cheques; please make these out to “Spanish Miners’ Solidarity Committee” and send them to: Caring Cunning ham (SMSC), 136 Regent Court, Bradfield Road, Sheffield S6 2BN, South Yorkshire. As soon as bank details are finalised the Committee will publicise these as widely as possible giving all the necessary information for you to make donations on a regular basis, including taking out standing orders.

This is a monumental dispute. The Spanish miners and their families must not be starved into submission.