Solidarity
For social ownership of the banks and industry

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Break pay freeze! Reverse the inequality spiral!

A million to strike on 10 July

Follow-up strategy needed: see page 5
Independent working-class representation in politics. A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.

A workers’ charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to defend our rights against racism.

Maximise left unity in action, and openness in debate.

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- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
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- 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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By Martin Thomas

Russia has recognised Ukraine’s newly-elected president Petro Poroshenko by opening talks with him (through the Russian ambassador in Ukraine) on 8 June.

The talks have for now dispelled talk of further US or EU sanctions against Ukraine, and boosted the Russian stock market.

According to the Financial Times (9 June), Putin has three chief demands. Ukraine to “give regions veto powers over foreign policy decisions made by Kiev — in part as a guarantor of Russian interests.

“That would involve arrangements similar to those the 1995 Dayton Agreement produced in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (three governments in the area, loosely coordinated by a confederal administration and international control).

Poroshenko is for rights for the Russian language in Ukraine, and greater decen-tralisation, but can scarcely cede a built-in Russian veto over Ukrainian policy.

Secondly, Russia does not want Ukraine to join NATO. Neither does Poroshenko, so agreement should be possible there.

Thirdly, Putin does not want closer relations between Ukraine and the EU. Ukraine joining the EU is out of the question in the short term, since no-one in Ukraine pushes it as an immediate move, and even if someone did, the EU would be unwilling any time soon to admit a new member state much poorer than Romania.

Ukraine: Moscow wants “Bosnia model”

By Michéal MacEoin

Yoo Ki-soo, General Secretary of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), was arrested on Wednesday (26 May) by the South Korean government, after a protest calling on the government to take responsibility for the Sewol Ferry Disaster.

The ferry was carrying 476 people — mostly South Korean schoolchildren. It sank on 16 April off the southern coast of the country.

The death toll has reached 288, with 16 people still unaccounted for. No bodies have been found since 21 May.

Many people believe the disaster to be the result of deregulation and poor government oversight of industrial health and safety.

The demonstration at which Yoo Ki-soo was arrested followed a rally concerning workers’ rights violations at Samsung.

In recent years there have been at least three deaths at Samsung Electronics Service. In October 2013, Yim Hyeon-woo died of a brain haemorrhage caused by overwork.

A month later, Choi Jong-beom committed suicide, in protest against the company’s harsh labour discipline and attempts to crush a unionisation drive.

The latest suicide was that of Yeom Ho-seok on 16 May, a 34-year-old trade union representative who faced months of management threats and harassment for his union activities.

On 18 May, around 400 police raided the morgue at Seoul Medical Centre and seized his body after a tense stand-off with 100 trade unionists, at which police arrested 24 people.

The state has apparently cremated Yeom Ho-seok’s body against his dying wishes, which were for his body to “remain in state until his local wins [recognition].”

Meanwhile, trade union organisations including the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) have called for Yoo Ki-soo’s release, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has hinted that a team may be sent to South Korea to investigate the labour rights situation.

The online campaigning website Labour Start is running an appeal for trade unionists in South Korea:

www.labourstart.org/2013

Free Yoo Ki-soo, South Korean union leader!

By Katya Dolman

Cinema workers’ union BECTU has called for a national boycott of Picturehouse Cinemas until they agree a pay deal with workers at The Ritzy in Brixton, south London, who are striking to win the London Living Wage.

Picturehouse Cinemas bosses pulled out of talks with BECTU and unilaterally imposed a 4% pay deal, which still leaves almost all staff paid below the poverty line.

Ritzy workers’ sixth strike, on Saturday 7 June, saw solidarity actions at Picturehouse Cinemas elsewhere in London. Actor, documentary maker, and one-time footballer Eric Cantona joined the Brixton Ritzy workers as they protested outside the Hackney Picturehouse.

Ritzy workers have received a lot of support and solidarity from other workers in the local area. They’ve received solidarity visits from striking college workers, local government workers, transport workers and firefighters. Workers at Lambeth Living, the Housing ALMO, responded to an article in their staff newsletter urging staff to take advantage of reduced prices at the Brixton Ritzy Cinema, with a letter calling on people to join the boycott of Picturehouse.

AWL members and supporters gave out hundreds of leaflets in solidarity with the Brixton strikers outside Greenwich Picturehouse. We turned many cinema-goers away and a number asked for their money back for pre-paid tickets.

- Abridged from bit.ly/ritzy-boycott
- For more, see facebook.com/ritzyliving-wage, ritzylivingwage.org, and @RitzyLivingWage on Twitter.

Boycott Picturehouse!
Take all religion out of our schools!

By Sean Matgamna

A group of three acade-
mes, one other academy, and all the council-con-
trolled school in Bir-
ing-
ham have been put into “special measures” by Of-
sted government inspec-
tors for allegedly acting like “faith schools.” Ofsted complains that Park View school has weekly “Islamic-themed as-
semblies”, with invited speakers “not vetted”, and that from year 9 onwards religious education is al-
most entirely Islamic. Faith schools are explicitly al-
lowed to have their as-
semblies, and their religious education, organised around their chosen reli-
gion, and to imbue other subjects with religious ide-
ology.

The scandal is not only about Muslims, but goes right across the spectrum of religions. In Birmingham, the term refers to an al-
leged “Muslim plot” to turn the Birmingham schools into indoctrination centres for “extremist” Islam and the covering right off one of the great scandals in British life.

The possible social conse-
quences of the continued development of faith schools are dreadful to con-
template. Faith and ethnic-
ity here often go together. Faith schools are also often race-segregated schools. In-
stead of schools being a force for integrating com-
munities, they entrench so-
cial, ethnic, and religious antagonisms. Children are moulded and narrowed in one outlook.

Faith schools in Northern Ireland played a significant part in maintaining, rein-
forcing, and perpetuating Protestant-Catholic sectar-
ianism. It was the Catholic Church, the church of the most oppressed people in Northern Ireland, which in-
sisted on faith schools — or rather, on its own right to indoctrinate children with its beliefs.

At the height of the Trou-
bles, a small group of peo-
ple started “mixed” schools, schools with full religious freedom of religious belief and practice. The movement has so far had limited success. It would have been better to have had “mixed” schools before sec-
tarian conflict had ramped up.

What all this means for Britain now and for what sensible people should advocate for Britain now is plain: take religion out of our schools. Make edu-
cation secular and private. Make religion a private matter.

Better texts... better vision!

By Francis Jones

GCSE English Literature hit the headlines after outrage on social media at the “banning” of certain well-loved texts including John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men and Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird.

The DfE were swift to claim that they had not banned any texts and denying Michael Gove has “a particular dislike” of Of Mice and Men. But what has not been denied is that Gove had significant per-
sonal involvement in the design of the syllabus as distinct from the exams themselves, which the exam boards control.

Governments should en-
force the law against, for ex-
ample, those who hold religiously-motivated bombing campaigns. And governments have a role and a duty to interfere with what religions people do when they break the social code — for instance, ill-
treatment of children by Christian sects, such as the one Victoria Climbie’s mur-
dering parents were a part of. Parents are a part of the law, and duty to interfere with the law.

The problem is in part the marshmallow language the Government uses — “extremists” and “moderates.” It is also that much of the Government’s talk about “British values” is “spin” rather than something that has or will have substance to it.

It is essentially that once schools are run by vigorous, convinced, ardentley reli-
gious people, mandating “moderate” values is either a denial of the work they do, or a non-
sense, or both.

The talk about schools in-
culturizing “British values” in children is empty bombast. The government lists among those values “toler-
ance” and “respect” for those of different faiths. What does that mean? All serious religious people must believe that their own faith is the one true faith. All of them teach that. Ex-
plify or by implication, they believe that other reli-
gious beliefs and practices are wrong, pernicious, even the work of the Devil.

When a religion ceases to think it bears the only real truth, it is on the road to self-delusion, self-deception, self-isolation, at a quicker or faster pace. Anglicanism is an ex-
ample. A group of religious minds that the truth and godly inspiration of one’s own religion im-
plies intolerance and con-
trary to faith, and desire to subdue, the false religion.

Now the Government says that devout Muslims — often the most convinced and most militant of con-
temporary religious people — must be “moderate”, and must have “respect” and “tolerance” for those whom their religion tells them are makings and evil.

No doubt the majority of British Muslims do not hold the “extreme” positions, but those who do have the moral high ground against them, appealing to prece-
dent, age-old tradition, and a sense of historical identity and affinity.

Governments should en-
force the law against, for ex-
ample, those who hold religiously-motivated bombing campaigns. And governments have a role and a duty to interfere with what religions people do when they break the social code — for instance, ill-
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dering parents were a part of. Parents are a part of the law, and duty to interfere with the law.

The problem is in part the marshmallow language the Government uses — “extremists” and “moderates.” It is also that much of the Government’s talk about “British values” is “spin” rather than something that has or will have substance to it. In the name of religion is studied only in their sacred books, the histories, the origins of their sacred books, the derivation and evolution of their faith beliefs, etc.

That would give the chil-
dren some secular space to retreat to in face of bullying, insistent parents or reli-
gious officials, and give them different values to counterpose to the religious values of homes which may be spiritually from a differ-
ent age and very different societies.

The children of religious parents are entitled to the protection of society and the social institutions. In most schools today small girls go about covered from top to toe in Islamic religious dress. A society that does not win children from such impositions is obscene, and if it does not use the law to stop them will be convinc-
ing neither to itself nor to the serious religious people and modern commercial society and for those who would regular and “moderate” them.

The possible social conse-
quences of the continued development of faith schools are dreadful to con-
template. Faith and ethnic-
ity here often go together. Faith schools are also often race-segregated schools. In-
stead of schools being a force for integrating com-
munities, they entrench so-
cial, ethnic, and religious antagonisms. Children are
Labour needs a new leader, and not one of the usual suspects

Eric Lee

After Labour’s abysmal showing in the Newark by-election, which closely followed on its poor showing in the European elections, it is becoming increasingly clear that the party faces defeat yet again in the 2015 general election. That would mean another five years of Tory rule, something which would be a disaster for working people in this country.

There’s considerable discontent and unease in Labour’s ranks, and disappointment at Ed Miliband’s role as party leader, making the question of who should lead Labour into the election a crucial one. Yet there are very few good suggestions.

Tony Blair seems to want to return to political life, but that’s not going to happen. Gordon Brown already proved he’s a completely ineffective campaigner when he lost to Cameron in 2010. Ed’s brother David has wandered off to do good work for the International Rescue Committee. There seems to be no one around to step in and provide leadership at a time when it is sorely needed.

But let’s try to imagine for just a moment what the ideal Labour leader might look like.

First of all, if Labour is to be in touch with the party’s working-class roots, it needs to re-capture those communities from UKIP. Of course, Labour should choose someone who shares those roots, who comes out of the working class.

Second, Labour needs to rebuild its links — already quite tenuous — with the trade union movement. The 54 TUC-affiliated unions have nearly six million members, all of them potential voters, and a leader who could appeal to them specifically would do well in attracting many of them back to the party that bears their name. That leader would also need to appeal to the millions of working people who are not currently in trade unions, and who often do not vote — the people who feel excluded, disengaged and ignored.

Third, Labour needs to understand how deeply disillusioned voters are with the political class. Its next leader shouldn’t come out of the ranks of Labour’s contingent in Westminster. Labour needs a fresh face, someone who’s not been an MP or Minister.

And finally, the time has come — indeed, it is long overdue — for Labour to have a female leader. Nearly 40 years have passed since the Conservatives accepted that a woman could lead a party (albeit with disastrous results for the country). Why has Labour in opposition and in power always been led by those who are “stale, pale and male”, as Asa Briggs put it?

The person who I heard that from more than a decade ago was former Home Secretary and TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady, who I heard that from more than a decade ago. Her name was Frances O’Grady and today she’s the first female general secretary of the TUC in its history. If anyone could re-energise the Labour Party, she’s the one.

People who can’t bear the thought of David Cameron being re-elected Prime Minister in 2015 should be prepared to take risks, to do what’s not been done before.

That’s why Labour supporters should launch a “Draft Frances” movement today.

Help us raise £12,000 by October

Solidarity is a unique publication within revolutionary, left-wing politics. Through donations and funding we are able to consistently share our critical thought and revolutionary, left-wing politics. Through donations and funding we are able to consistently share our critical thought and revolutionary, left-wing politics.

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

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More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

Over the last month we have raised £744 in increased standing orders, donations and book profits.

Grand total: £3884.

How the rich live

On the same day the Financial Times published its regular glossy, How to spend it, it is the most disgusting contrast imaginable to the Guardian’s story. If ever a publication deserved the label, “Decadent Bourgeois Shit”, this FT magazine is it. How to spend it is aimed at people who are so enormously, fabulously rich they don’t really know “how to spend it.” This magazine aims to help them.

Obviously it would be too vulgar for the kind of products advertised here to have a price attached. Needless to write, however, that all the watches, bags, clothes and jewellery cost thousands — sometimes tens of thousands — of pounds. None of us could afford to spend £2000 on a shopping bag, £50,000 on a watch — but could you imagine ever wanting to?

What type of a world allows people to buy a suede jacket costing £1306? And especially when many others earn the minimum wage, currently £6.31 an hour.

The richest 10% have now 850 times the wealth of the poorest 10%. The top 1% of earners take 14% of all income. And the consequences are not just seen in the magistrates courts — places intended to deal with the poor. For example, the gap in life expectancy between the very rich and poor in London is now a staggering 25 years.

The contrast between the lives of the very rich and the poor is not only stark, it is also obscenely unnecessary. This irrationality is part of the case for socialism.
Make 10 July the start, not the end

More than one million public sector workers could strike on Thursday 10 July. Workers across local government, education, the civil service, the fire service, and other public sector workplaces and industries are likely to launch coordinated strikes over pay.

Some unions, like the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), have live ballots from ongoing sectoral disputes which will allow them to strike on 10 July. The PCS is currently consulting its members over participation in a mass strike. Transport for London workers in the RMT, TSSA, and Unite unions could also join the strike. Other unions, like Unison and GMB, are balloting their membership, with Unison’s ballot set to conclude on 23 June.

Local government and NHS employers have offered 1% pay deals. Across the public sector, workers have faced years of pay freezes which, coupled with rising inflation, amount to pay cuts. Low pay is endemic, with the shocking rise in the use of food banks evidence of just how hard working-class people are finding it to get by. The 10 July strike could be a spark that helps ignite a wider fightback.

The strike will be the largest set-piece conflict between the government and the labour movement since the 2011 public sector pensions dispute. That battle ended in defeat, and activists in public sector unions need to organise to ensure this strike does not meet the same fate.

In 2011, workers were mobilised for one-off strike days, separated by months of inactivity and relatively little communication between unions and members about developments in negotiations. The remedy to that is not merely to strike for more days, converting one-day protest strikes into two-day protest strikes, but to make strikes part of ongoing programmes of action (including selective action as well as all-out strikes), directed by local strike committees. Strike funds should be levied at both local and national level to ensure the lowest-paid workers are supported in taking the sustained and escalating action that will almost certainly be necessary to push the government back. Workers in every sector should formulate clear demands for their disputes.

The overwhelming vote by University and College Union and Unison members in Higher Education to accept a 2% pay offer shows that there are still areas where workers lack confidence. That confidence can be rebuilt if workers across the public sector feel ownership and control over their disputes, and are able to direct it and its demands.

One million workers striking will be, if nothing else, a reminder of the potential power of organised labour. The labour movement, often so lacking in visibility as a social force, will reassert itself. Whether that reassertion is a brief token, or the beginning of an ongoing industrial and political campaign to rebuild working-class self-confidence and confront the government, depends greatly on what revolutionary socialists and other rank-and-file militants in workplaces do over the next weeks.

Using the prospect of the strike to build workplace meetings and local committees could ensure that 10 July is the start of something, rather than an end in itself.

The president of the Bakers’ Union has called for a general strike against austerity, and for a £10 living wage. Ian Hodson used his speech at BFAWU annual conference to attack food industry bosses, and said that attacks on the pay and conditions of the union’s members would be met with industrial action. He alluded to the fast food workers’ struggles for a living wage that have been taking place internationally, and pledged to organise a similar campaign amongst fast food workers in the UK. The BFAWU won a dispute over zero-hour contracts at the Hovis bakery in Wigan last year.

Their Europe and ours

The political structures of the European Union exemplify how badly the bourgeoisie “does democracy” when they are under no pressure from a confident working-class political organisation.

European political structures — the elected European Parliament, the European Council made up of heads of government and the Commission with member-state appointees — are all bureaucratic and dominated by obscure political horse-trading by member states.

This EU elitism is part of the reason why Eurosceptic parties (including the British Conservative Party) strike a chord among European workers.

But David Cameron’s attempt to veto the appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker to head the European Commission is not a sign of altruism, nor an attempt to make EU institutions more democratic. Within the highly-limited standards of EU democracy it is the exact opposite.

Juncker is the preferred candidate of the conservative political bloc which won the largest chunk of popular votes in May’s European election. But Cameron isn’t bothered by the tally of the popular vote. He prefers “back room methods”, arm twisting and nationalistic special pleading. Cameron, with an eye on his UKIP rivals, wants to be seen to be “fighting for Britain”. No matter that there is no great difference on economic policies between Juncker and the British Tory party.

It would be a whole lot better if the political semi-union of Europe, which Cameron chose out of political expediency to object to, were more democratic, more transparent and were not tied to a drive to make workers pay for the crisis.

But it is still a big step forward for working-class people around Europe that barriers between nations have been drastically reduced.

At a time when migrants are being scapegoated we need those barriers to stay down.

The semi-dissolution of the barriers has made it easier to fight the class struggle across Europe. If the labour movement leaders of Europe had any imagination they could run powerful Europe-wide campaigns. For instance they could organise a Europe-wide struggle for a decent Living Wage, one which would could generalise much needed solidarity to existing struggles of low-paid workers.

Unfortunately there are some on the left in Europe who oppose the existence of the political union of the EU (in the UK it is the No2EU campaign). The logic of their campaign is to advocate the resurrection of national barriers. In this way they add to the increasing toxic nationalism of UKIP and Cameron. The Labour Party has also joined the clamour against Juncker for the sake of the UK’s “national interest”.

The workers’ movements of Europe need to forge working-class unity across borders, based on demands to oppose austerity and an alternative political programme. That could include:

• Europe-wide public ownership of all the big banks, and democratic control of credit and monetary policy.
• For a Republican United States of Europe! Scrap the existing bureaucratic structures and replace them with a sovereign elected European Parliament with full control over all EU affairs.
• Fight to level up working class living standards and conditions. For a common campaign for a legal 35 hour week and a decent European minimum wage.
Their Class War and Ours

Discussions on Marxism and fighting oppression

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- How world war became world revolution

Other IFF events on Thursday/Friday 4/5 July.
Book at www.workersliberty.org/ideas
Challenging the ANC’s neo-liberalism

Mzwamile Tsholela is a chair of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) branch at the Mercedes Benz plant in East London, Eastern Cape province. He is also a member of the global Works Council [employee-employer consultation body] for Mercedes Benz’s parent company Daimler. He spoke to Solidarity on 23-25 May during the LabourStart conference in Berlin.

S: We have heard about NUMSA calling on the Confederation of South African Unions (COSATU) to break with the ANC governing party.

MT: This is a hot debate within South African politics. In December 2013 NUMSA had a special congress to discuss six resolutions. One was about the alliance between COSATU and the ANC.

Another was the situation in COSATU, which is paralysed. COSATU has become the “labour desk” of the ANC, rather than a revolutionary trade union federation. It is no longer serving the interests of the workers. After the last congress of COSATU in 2012, none of resolutions that were passed were progressed.

So NUMSA also said that we need to decide what we are doing in COSATU. We resolved not to go outside COSATU, we are one of the founding members, but to fight within COSATU, to get them to follow the mandates they have been given, including trying to get a special congress to discuss the future. Out of COSATU’s 19 affiliates, nine feel the same way.

According to COSATU’s constitution, one third can call a special congress. A special congress could decide if the leaders are still relevant. The President is obliged to call the congress, but he has been avoiding it. We have now taken the issue to the courts.

[COSATU’s next congress is not scheduled until 2106. At the beginning of June the Executive passed a resolution which instructs affiliates to cease divisive programmes for another month, while a peace deal can be drawn up].

NUMSA has also resolved not to support the ANC in the National Assembly elections [held last month with a slight reduction in the ANC majority]. We don’t see any benefit from the ANC and its agenda. They are always adopting neoliberal policies. The Marikana massacre has been one of the really important issues behind our decision but it is not the only issue.

Establish a United Front

NUMSA will lead in the establishment of a new United Front that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the United Democratic Front of the 1980s. The task of this front will be to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and to be an organisational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP. For this to happen our members and shop stewards must be active on all fronts and in all struggles against neoliberal policies, whether these policies are being implemented in the workplace or in communities.

Explore establishment of a Movement for Socialism

Side by side with the establishment of the new United Front, NUMSA will explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism as the working-class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa. NUMSA will conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism. We will commission an international study on the historical formation of working-class parties, including exploring different type of parties – from mass workers’ parties to vanguard parties. We will look at countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece. We will examine their programmes with the aim of identifying elements of what may constitute a revolutionary programme for the working class. This entire process will lead to the union convening a Conference on Socialism.

http://www.numsa.org.za
workers because many have to travel long distances to get to work and already pay fuel tax, VAT and other tolls).

They also want to change the Labour Relations Law. They want to make sacking workers easier.

Such issues, together with that of political corruption and nepotism, mean we have had enough.

What happens if we don’t win our position? We believe that COSATU have had a clear instruction by the ANC to get rid of us. But that is easier said than done. NUMSA is the biggest union within COSATU. And there are nine unions who are sure to leave COSATU. They want NUMSA to leave on its own and NUMSA is not going to do that. We cannot make their life easy.

S: If you are expelled will you form a new federation? Or force them to take you back?

MT: We will try by all means to remain within COSATU. But if the environment is intolerable or we are expelled we will definitely be the catalyst in forming another federation. We have also [passed policy] to form a “movement for socialism”. We don’t have a manifesto, but our constitution says explicitly what we stand for. NUMSA is a Marxist-Leninist orientated organisation. Originally this would have come from the South African Communist Party. But not now. The SACP has been absorbed by the ANC. We can’t be guided by these people now.

NUMSA provides many forums for discussion of politics and all the issues have been discussed for some time and thoroughly, NUMSA is a member-driven organisation. The resolutions to our congress came from below.

S: There has also been talk about the formation of a new political party. Could you say something about that?

MT: The ANC of today is not pushing the workers’ agenda but that of the dominant class. The deputy president of South Africa and the ANC [Cyril Ramaphosa] is the one that who had so many negative things to do with Marikana.

We have taken a decision to first form a united front. We cannot just be a union at plant or industry level. Because the very issues that are affecting us there are wider social issues. We need to engage everyone within society. We aim to have a conference to which we will invite all the left organisations, all also groups fighting for social justice, community organisations, everyone, even churches for that matter. The invitation will be open, then there will be discussions about the party that could represent us.

There has been confusion in the media about this initiative. It is not NUMSA forming the political party. NUMSA will play a big part, our organisers will be involved; but we will be only the catalyst.
Book now for 3-6 July!

Ideas for Freedom is the annual weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers’ Liberty.

The theme of this year’s Ideas for Freedom is “Their class war and ours”. We will be looking not just at how the working class can defend and reorganise itself in the face of a determined capitalist assault, but how the left can put the very concepts of class, class struggle and a socialist alternative to capitalism back on the political agenda. That will be the theme of the opening plenary at 12 noon on Saturday 5 July. What other ideas will be discussed at the event?

RENEWING THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND LEFT

The past four years of class struggle have shown that our trade union movement is not up to the job.

However there have been and continue to be many inspiring workers’ struggles. How can we generalise the inspiration and lessons of these battles to prepare for the possibility of more widespread workers’ action as the economy revives?

Will the 10 July public sector strikes, by far the biggest working-class action since 2011, be the beginning of a revival? At 4.30pm on Saturday, activists from two very different union branches both currently involved in pitched struggle will speak on How can the unions regrow? Ruth Cashman, branch secretary of Lambeth Union, and Jason Moyer-Lee of University of London IWGB, speak alongside professor Gregor Gall, a noted writer on the labour movement.

To revive, the labour movement also needs political perspectives. IFF will feature a panel on Will there be a Labour government? What should the left demand of Labour?, with speakers including John McDonnell MP and James Elliot of Labour Students for Free Education (2.50pm, Saturday).

Later in the day we will debate Simon Hardy, national secretary of the RMT women’s committee chair Becky Crocker on How can the unions regrow?

LIBERATION AND INTERNATIONALISM

Fighting specific oppressions such as those based on gender, ethnicity and sexuality is an essential part of the fight to change the world — and an area that has generated much discussion on the left recently.

It will be a major theme of IFF 2014. On the night of Friday 4 July we will be holding a special meeting on A century of radical women’s struggles, with speakers including Jill Mountford on Sylvia Pankhurst and the First World War, RMT women’s committee chair Becky Crocker on transforming the labour movement so it fights for women’s liberation and SUArts President Shelly Asquith on recent struggles by women workers and students at London universities.

We will be discussing the surge of the nationalist right in Europe and Is the far right winning over Europe’s workers?, with Matt Cooper, Yves Coleman from the French journal Ni Patir Ni Fronteries and Greek socialist Theodora Polента (4.30, Saturday). We will also be discussing migrants’ struggles in Britain, in history and today, with Vicki Morris and the new NUS International Students’ Officer Sheeya Paudel (1pm, Sunday).

IFF will also include a forum on The international fight for LGBT rights, with RMT London Transport LGBT Officer Paul Penny and activists from the African Out and Proud Diamond Group (1pm, Sunday).

Internationalism will be a strong theme of the event, with Indian Marxist Jairus Banaji speaking on the struggle after Narendra Modi’s election (10am, Saturday) and a speaker from Turkish rank-and-file workers’ movement IID-DER on class struggle after the Soma mining disaster.

For more information, see:

• www.workersliberty.org/ideas
• aww@workersliberty.org
• +07796 690 874

Venue details
IFF takes place mainly at University of London Union (Malet Street, WC1E 7HY – Russell Square, Euston or Goodge Street tube) on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 July, but there are also events at other locations on the evenings of 3 and 4 July. For more information about the event, including a full timetable, and to book tickets visit www.workersliberty.org/ideas

Women Against Pit Closures try to stop a scab coach passing during the miners’ strike
The ideology of Donetsk leaders

Apologetics, if not outright support, for the forces of political reaction and oppression have become a hallmark of sections of the socialist left in the two and a half decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The “rationality” for such an abandonment of basic socialist principles is rooted in a bogus “anti-imperialism”, according to which any force in conflict with “imperialism” (defined solely as the USA and the European Union) is automatically presumed worthy of some degree or other of support.

Thus the “anti-imperialist” left is well advanced in repeating the same mistake in relation to the conflict in the southeast of Ukraine.

Obsessed with the role played (or allegedly played) by the US and the European Union, fantasising about the supposed power wielded by fascist organisations in Ukraine, it shunts its eyes to the actual politics of those playing the leading role in the Russian-separatist forces.

On this occasion the result is even more bizarre than usual: the “anti-imperialist” left ends up in a de facto alliance with a political ideology committed to imperialist expansion and containing pronounced elements of fascism.

Eurasianism

Eurasianism first emerged as a relatively systematised set of ideas amongst White émigrés in the early 1920s.

Central to those ideas was the belief that Russia represented a unique civilisation with its own traditions and path of historical development.

Russia’s future, argued the Eurasians, lay not in following in the footsteps of Europe or Asia (although it would incorporor take certain elements of both). Instead, they looked forward to the eventual collapse of the west and the emergence of an expanded Russia as a leading imperial power in its own right.

Eurasianism remained the preserve of Russian diaspora intellectuals until the collapse of the Soviet Union, since when it has become a significant political movement in Russia itself.

The main traits of Eurasianism today are: a commitment to restoring the glories of imperial Russia; the expansion of Russia’s borders to incorporate the territories of the ancient kingdom of Rus; hostility to western liberal values, which it holds responsible for what it sees as the decline and degeneration of the west.

The European Union and the USA — and Jews — are regarded as responsible for the post-Soviet economic and social collapse of Russia. Stalin, on the other hand, is admired as someone who established Russia as a world power.

Eurasianism is socially conservative and singles out gay rights for particular condemnation. Although it frequently presents itself as “anti-fascist”, its “anti-fascism” is no more than a Russian-imperialist glorification of Stalin’s defeat of Nazi Germany and the subsequent occupation of Eastern Europe.

At best, Eurasianism is a form of extreme Russian nationalism.

And it is the politics of Eurasianism which are exposed by leading figures in the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, by the websites which seek to rally support for them, and by those political forces which have taken the lead in Russia in mobilising support for them.

Alexander Prokhanov

Prokhanov is probably Russia’s best-known fascist. In terms of Russian journalism, his newspaper Zavtra (The Day) after it was banned) is certainly the most vile.

Prokhanov is an uncritical admirer of Stalinism. He backed the aborted Stalinist coup of 1991 in Russia. He blames Jews for Russia’s misfortunes. He preaches the (alleged) crimes committed by the Germans.

Prokhanov not only lauded the stand taken by the separatist insurgents but also called for Russian/Chechen support:

“…(People I met in Slaviansk) are not fighting for decentralisation of Putin’s Russia but… for the preservation of our own Russian nation and its greatness. Their courage is the shield of our past and our future.”

In the course of the discussions it was agreed that participants in the Izborsky Club — the greatest minds and politicians of the Russian World — will develop the economic and ideological conception of the future state of Novorossiya.”

“It was also suggested to Pavel that he become a participant in the Izborsky Club, and that he also open a branch of the organisation in the Donetsk People’s Republic.” (1)

In a Skype interview with Prokhanov posted on the Russian Spring (RS) website (which functions as a kind of semi-official mouthpiece for Eurasianism in south-east Ukraine), Prokhanov not only lauded the stand taken by the separatist insurgents but also called for Russian/Chechen support:

“How can we live in Russia if we do not help (the pro-Russian insurgents)? We cannot do so. We will perish spiritually. Where is our Russian patriotic spirit? The Chechen people have undergone a miraculous transformation. And today it is ready to repay in kindness what Russia has done for them.”

“I appeal to the inhabitants of the south-east, I am filled with hatred and with love. Now, there, with you — is my people. In Slaviansk and surrounding settlements of bloods, hearts ripped out of their bodies, the crushing of human fates.” (5)

“In the Donetsk People’s Republic my comrades are dying. Those close to me. It is not just the neo-Nazis of the (Kiev) junta who are killing them, but also the separatists. More exactly, the preparations of the sixth column who openly betray the President and sabotage his decisions.”

“…What lies ahead is the fateful inevitability of war. Will it begin, and how long will it last? But if it does not begin, then not only Novorossiya is finished but also Russia.” (6)

Dugin is also a great admirer of Gubarev, who he sees as turning his ideas into reality, and of the “Novorossiya” party recently created by Gubarev: “This is our party and we fully recognise the orientation and values which it defends.” (7)

Pavel Gubarev

Currently the self-styled “People’s Governor of the Donetsk People’s Republic”, and founder of the new political party “Novorossiya”, Gubarev is a former member of the Russian neo-Nazi paramilitary organisation Russian National Unity (RNU), and also a former member of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU).

Despite its name, the latter is a bizarre ultra-Russian-nationalist organisation. Current articles on its website include PSPU leader Vitenko’s address to a recent Forum of Russian-Orthodox Women, entitled: “A Russian-Orthodox Mobilisation Will Save Holy Rus — Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia.” (8)

Challenged in a recent interview about his former membership of the RNU, Gubarev replied that he had been a member of the organisation for “a long time ago but have no idea what it is now”. (9)

Under the headline “We Are Building a New Russia”, the RS which posted an interview in which Gubarev had given to Zavtra during the DPV interview (not withstanding his “left-of-centre leanings”). According to Gubarev:

“…(People I met in Slaviansk) are not fighting for decentralisation, or federalisation, or budgetary autonomy. They are fighting for high ideals, for the true Russian Orthodox-Scav-Slav cause, which finds expression in the idea of Novorossiya. We are being watched not only by the entire Russian world but also by the entire planet earth.” (10)

Alexander Dugin

Dugin has long played a leading role in fascist and Eurasian organisations: the National Bolshevik Party, the National Bolshevik Front, the Eurasia Party, the Eurasian Movement, and the Eurasian Youth Union.

Dugin’s views epitomise much of what modern Eurasianism stands for. More of an intellectual than Prokhanov and relatively speaking) less of a mystic, it is Dugin rather than Prokhanov who acts as the ideologist-in-chief of the broader Eurasian movement.

Dugin advocates: hostility to the USA and Europe as a source of decadence and degeneration due to their liberal values; support for the strong corporate state and subordination of the individual to that state, and the creation of a vast intercontinental Eurasian state.

Dugin wrote for Dvoin before it was banned, and then went on to write for Zavtra. He is also a member of the Izborsky Club. On the website of the Information Agency of Novorossiya a page is given over to Dugin’s writings (3), and his articles are also published on the RS website.

“Our political revolution is clearly antithetical. Not for Russia and Putin but for Russia and Putin. For a strong, open and free Russian Russian-Orthodox Eurasian State … not for the domination of Western values and Gay Parades.” (4)

“… How long ago but when is history? In order to move to an inch what is needed is fountains of bloods, hearts ripped out of their bodies, the crushing of human fates.” (5)

“In the Donetsk People’s Republic our party is finished but also Russia.” (6)

Dugin is also a great admirer of Gubarev, who he sees as turning his ideas into reality, and of the “Novorossiya” party recently created by Gubarev: “This is our party and we fully recognise the orientation and values which it defends.” (7)

Alexander Borodai

Prime Minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Alexander Borodai worked with Prokhanov on the Zavtra newspaper in the 1990s and then collaborated with him on the Dvoin television channel (which shares the same
politics as Zavtra.

Prokhonov approvingly describes Borodai as: “A Russian nationalist. He is a supporter of a strong Russian state. ... He’s always been close to me, and has preached the idea of a Russian social nationalism — and imperial consciousness.”

In an interview published on the RS website Borodai described himself as “A Russian patriot. I consider that the extent of the Russian world was artificially reduced as a result of recent circumstances, and that the Russian world was divided by artificially created borders.” (11)

In the same interview Borodai described the unrest in the south of Ukraine as “a Russian uprising, Russian in the broad sense of the word — in terms of culture, mentality and civilisation.”

Borodai consciously sees himself as a political disciple of Lev Gumilev, one of the founding fathers of the Eurasian ideology in the early 1920s. For a full analysis of Borodai’s politics, see bit.ly/1pZE8TO

ANDREY FURSOV

Fursov is a Russian academic and historian, and also a member of the Izbrozky Club initiated by Prokhonov. As with Dugin, a page on the website of the Information Agency of Novorossiya gives men to Fursov’s articles (12), which are also regularly published on the RS website.

Fursov is a Russian nationalist who sees the current epoch as one of the collapse of the capitalist west and the resurgence of Russia in the face of American hostility: “The main task of the USA is the destabilisation of Eurasia. And the destabilisation of Russia is the destabilisation of Russia.”

For Fursov, the great figure in recent Russian history is Stalin. Under the latter’s rule “a huge part of Eurasia became united. Stalin is the author of the anti-global neo-imperial project in the twentieth century, Stalin showed how one can oppose the Globalists. Stalin delayed globalisation for almost 70 years.” (14)

The driving financial force behind the Globalists, according to Fursov, is the Rothschilds. But whereas the Rothschilds attempted to compromise with the Rothschilds, Stalin made no concessions and thereby earned the hatred of the Globalists.

The current resurgence of Russia began with the annexation of the Crimea: “The Crimean project drew a line under the shame which began on 2nd/3rd December 1989 when, after having flown to visit the well-known Russianophile Pope John Paul II, Gorbachev flew to Malta and there surrendered the Russian people to Bush.” (16)

The resurgence of Russia is continuing with the upheavals in the south-east of Ukraine, according to Fursov, despite the role played by the USA, its secret services and the Rothschilds: “The Rothschild group is at work in the east of Ukraine. That’s the area they want to get their hands on. The interests of the Rothschilds strongly clash with the interests of Russia.” (13)

“The next player in Ukraine is Israel, which is represented in Ukraine by Mossad and practically all of the Israeli intelligence services. Aman, Shabak, Shin Bet, Nativ — they are all present in Ukraine. Mossad operates in close contact with the CIA and MI6. It’s a unified snake of intelligence agencies, which gets the job done.” (17)

IVAN OKHLBOYST

Ivan Okhlobystyn is a film celebrity whose career includes a spell as a Duma deputy and a member of the Kremlin-sponsored pseudo-opposition party Right Cause. He is also pro-monarchy.

According to Okhlobystyn, anyone who cannot “choose someone similar from the opposite sex for reproduction” suffers from “a psychic anomaly” and should be banned from voting. “Official sodomite organisations” offend people’s “deep-seated moral principles”.

Being gay is “queer fascism”, writes Okhlobystyn, it is “Sodom and Gomorrah”. His conclusion: “I would put all the gays alive into an oven.”

A recent statement by Okhlobystyn on the fighting in south-east Ukraine, first issued through Prokhonov’s Izbrozky Club and then published on the RS website, is steeped in the same xenophobia.

“As a pastor, a Slav, and as a citizen of the Great multinational Russia I welcome the struggle of the courageous defenders of Novorossiya — a bastion of Christian virtue and military valor.”

“I give my blessing to the destruction of this satanic fascist plague — without mercy, by all possible means — and to wiping from the face of the earth everything which is even a reminder of it. All those who give up their life in this war in defence of Divine Glory will end up in Paradise.” (18)

MAXIM KALASHNIKOV

Kalashnikov (real name: Vladimir Kucherenko) is simul-
taneously a Stalinist nostalgic and Russian ultra-national-
ist who calls for the creation of a new “federalised Russian empire”, consisting of Russia, almost all of Ukraine, parts of Belorussia, plus Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

According to Kalashnikov, “the white (western and Russian) part of humanity is in crisis” as a result of “industrialisation and deindustrialisation and deindustrialisation”. In the Russian world “the crisis of man is reflected in its most disgusting and protestant form”. The Russian people is becoming “excess biomass”.

The only way to save Russia from “degradation and extin-
tion” is the scientific creation of “super- and post-people, new forms of humans”. This will “provide us (Russians) with new strength. This can make Russia a world leader”. (20)

In the meantime, and more modestly, in an article on the RS website ("The Future of Russian Civilisation is Being De-

cided Here") Kalashnikov calls for Ukraine to be reduced to little more than a garden allotment sandwiched between “Carpathian Rus” to the west and “Malorossiya” and Novorossiya to the east.

“Those lands were never Ukraine. In these lands there was no Bandera movement during or after the Great Patriotic War. They did not greet Hitler with flowers here. Here they defended Odessa and Sevastopol to the last drop of their blood. ...”

“...What is needed is to spread the powerful flame of the movement for Novorossiya across Ukraine in its agones, as it descends into poverty and ruin. ... The remainder of Ukraine (i.e. post-dismemberment), mortally struck down by Russophobia, will become a poverty-stricken super-

Moldova, cut off from the sea.” (21)

ISRAEL SHAMIR

Shamir is an internationally well-known anti-semite and Holocaust denier who peddles the traditional tropes of anti-Zionism. It says much about the politics of the RS website, and of those whom the website wishes to mobilise support for, that this website has published his material.

According to Shamir, Jews control the media (“The rich Jews buy media so it will cover their (and their brethren’s) issues.”) and to understand the politics of the latter for what they are — not socialist, not anti-imperialist, not some concession to Western liberalism — any more than it entails support for the USA and the European Union.

Nor does it mean ignoring the very real social and economic issues in the south-east of Ukraine which the likes of Borodai and Guabarev exploit in pursuit of their own political project: industrial decline, collapsing social services, the corruption and the huge wealth accumulated by local elites, and issues of political and national identity.

Each escalation of the level of military conflict — as the Kiev government pursues its so-called “Anti-Terrorist Opera-
tion” and more fighters cross the border into Ukraine from Russia — increases the level of polarisation around national rather than class identities.

Insofar as socialists can gain a hearing for their ideas against such a background, they need to expose and challenge not just the politics of the Ukrainian government but also the pro-Russian Eurasianism of the latter-day White Russian imperialists.

And to do that, they first need to be able to recognise and to understand the politics of the latter for what they are — anti-capitalist, not anti-imperialist, not some confused forerunner of socialism, but simply Russian-impe-
rialist and reactionary.

Notes

1) Information Agency of Novorossiya, 05/06/14
2) RS, 28/05/14
3) http://novorossia.su/persons/dugin
4) RS, 26/05/14
5) RS, 30/05/14
6) RS, 28/05/14
7) Ibid
8) PSU, 02/06/14
9) Information Agency of Novorossiya, 07/06/14
10) RS, 04/06/14
11) RS, 24/05/14
12) http://novorossia.su/persons/fursov
13) RV, 29/05/14
14) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGSveVuPa1k
15) Ibid
16) RS, 29/05/14
17) RS, 30/05/14
18) RS, 06/06/14
19) Ibid
20) http://2045.com/export/28.html
21) RS, 31/05/14
22) RS, 27/05/14
23) RS, 18/05/14
24) RS, 20/05/14
Unison to discuss pay fight

By a conference delegate

The Local Government sector conference of public sector Unison takes place on 15-16 June in Brighton, with the union’s National Delegate Conference immediately following from Tuesday 17 June to Friday 20 June.

Workers’ Liberty members and supporters will be in attendance as delegates and observers, distributing our bulletin and fighting for greater democracy and more focused industrial militancy across the union.

The conference gives delegates an opportunity to discuss strategy for the ongoing pay fights in Local Government and Health. In Local Government, Workers’ Liberty members will argue for the likely 10 July strike to be part of an ongoing and escalating campaign of industrial and political action, and supporting an amendment from the Islington Local Government branch that sets out this kind of radical, creative strategy.

In health, whilst Unison Health Conference (14-16 April) agreed a campaign on pay that could include a strike ballot, it has not been launched to coincide with 10 July strike date. A day of action on 7 June is a start, but delegates and Unison members should discuss urgently launching a proper strike ballot of NHS members.

Unison’s bureaucracy has ruled that a motion from the union’s Women’s Conference to develop a campaign about violence against women will not be discussed. The decision of the leadership not to hear the motion at all is disgraceful, and shows contempt for a serious issue that cannot be ignored by the left and labour movement.

Delegates will be challenging the right to overrule this motion on “legal” grounds. A fringe meeting on the issue, organised by Unison Women’s Committee, will argue why the motion should be discussed, and discuss how to develop the campaign. It will take place in Syndicate 1 at the Brighton Centre, at 12.45pm on Wednesday 18 June.

Dockers strike for 11 days

By Ollie Moore

A small group of workers at Tilbury docks, Essex, launched a 11-day strike on Thursday 5 June, against management plans to introduce zero-hours contracts.

The workers, who are employed by Swedish-owned SCA Logistics, also struck for 48 hours in May but say bosses haven’t budged.

Unite officer Jane Jeffery said: “If management is allowed to have its way, we will be turning the clock back 50 years to the bad old days when you had to rely on the tap on the shoulder to see if you had work for the day in the docks.”

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World Cup begins with strike and demonstrations

By Phil Grim

In the run up to the World Cup, the Brazilian city of São Paulo was rocked by demonstrations, riots and a subway strike.

Striking workers successfully closed over half the subway stations in the city, and are threatening to strike again on the day São Paulo hosts the first match of the tournament.

Angry that their wages have stagnated whilst the government spends billions on the World Cup, the strikers are demanding a 12% pay increase.

With large parts of the subway closed down, congestion in the city has skyrocketed. At its peak, it is estimated that up to 125 miles worth of traffic jams clogged the roads, a problem that will be exacerbated as hundreds of thousands of football fans begin to arrive.

The government, keen to break the strike before the tournament takes off, has responded brutally — riot police have stormed the subway to evict picketing workers, even using tear gas in the underground stations.

The strike has received support from other labour movement bodies such as the Landless Workers’ Movement, and the union says that if police repression worsens, it will appeal to other workers to strike in solidarity.

The prospect of a widespread strike across different sectors, slap bang in the middle of the World Cup, would put enormous pressure on the Brazilian government.

It’s not only striking workers who have been faced with heavy-handed police repression. In a bid to assert control over the slums and favelas of the big cities, riot police have launched a series of violent raids.

For some years, Rio de Janeiro police have been implementing a semi-military policy of “pacification” to wrestle control of the neighbourhoods from armed gangsters.

However, the brutality of the operations, as well as the corruption of the police force, have lead the inhabitants of the favelas to protest against the raids.

With the World Cup about to begin, the police have become more aggressive in a bid to stamp out unrest, in turn further inflaming the anger of those who live in the affected communities.

Brazilians have seen their government splash out enormous sums of money on a lavish sporting event, while millions struggle in poverty. With the eyes of the world focused on their country, they are making their grievances heard.

Police have responded to protests in the run up to the World Cup with brutality and repression.

Solidarity with Lambeth college strikers!

By Katy Dollar

Picket lines in Brixton and Clapham remain strong, as teaching staff at Lambeth College continue their strike.

Wednesday 11 June and Thursday 12 June will see Unison members strike alongside their brothers and sisters in the University and College Union (UCU).

College workers are striking against a contract brought in by the college from April for new staff only, which will mean they work longer hours, will work during the traditional college holidays, and will have less sick pay. UCU members began an indefinite strike on 3 June. Students have received text messages telling them to stay away from College as their classes have been cancelled.

The College has used agency staff to try and reduce the impact of the strike. College management are attempting to divide the college unions. A spokesperson for the College said: “The impact of the new contract on Unison members is minimal.” Despite such attempts to pit worker against worker and union against union, workers at the college continue to stand together. Unison Branch Secretaries Ruth Cashman and Jon Rogers responded to statements by the College: “The College bosses are showing their complete lack of interest in the future of Lambeth College by their constant attacks on the workers’ representatives and attempts to divide their workforce against itself. We reiterate: we stand with our sister union the UCU in opposing detrimental terms and conditions for workers and the imposition of a two-tier workforce. Unison is asking members to take this action because the senior management at Lambeth College are refusing to negotiate on the terms of new contracts which they have imposed upon new starters since 1 April, and which threaten the interests of existing staff.”

A solidarity rally will take place on Thursday 12 June at 6pm. Strikers are asking supporters to show solidarity by visiting picket lines, and passing a motion of support in their student union or trade union branch.

They are also asking for donations. Cheques payable to Lambeth UNISON, 6a Acre Lane SW2 5SG.

• lambethcollegestrike.wordpress.com