End the pay freeze! Build 10 July public sector strike

See page 5
**What is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty?**

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped 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 militantly against the bosses.

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

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

**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 struggle, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- 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 transgender people. Black and white workers’ unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinst rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to sell — and join us!

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**Thailand: preparing for a long struggle**

By Riki Lane

In the four weeks since the coup, the military have repressed, but not eliminated, dissent.

The wave of protests immediately after the coup was a check to the military and a break from the past. Showingly enormous courage, Thai working people demonstrated and supported their hunger strike and thousands. At first the military seemed non-plussed, then they started their crackdown. Even after rounds of arrests, people continued to protest in large numbers to find creative ways to organise such as changing the sites to places where they were not expected.

Arrests of activists have become widespread, mostly followed by release with warnings to be politically inactive or face more serious action. The military have become particularly organised about this rounding up of opponents and repressing any expression of dissent much more systematically than in the 2006 coup.

They are arresting any group of five people or more who can be interpreted as protesting. The resistance has taken their cues from art, appropriating Orwell’s 1984 and the three fingered salute from The Hunger Games. The military responded by shuttling down 1.984 in the Red Shirt stronghold of Chiang Mai, and arresting people for the three fingered salute.

Lese majesty is being used against opponents calling people in to present themselves to the military. This includes people from overseas, such as the UK SWP-aligned Giles Ungpakorn, who fled Thailand after being charged with lese majesty in 2009 for his account of the 2006 coup in his book A Coup for the Rich.

**MIGRANTS**

Now the military are attacking migrant workers deporting 25,000 Cambodian workers since 1 June.

Together with reports of brutal assaults by police and soldiers, this has triggered a wave of Cambodian workers fleeing back across the border from Thailand into Cambodia.

The military has tightened grip and seems firmly in control. The yellow shirts have got what they wanted — an unelected government rather than elected Red Shirt backed parties of Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra, which have won every election since 2001. As they cannot win elections, the monarchy’s “Yellow Shirts’ call for an end to the “tyranny of the parliamentary system”.

Yellow Shirt leaders argue that elected members of parliament be “balanced” by appointment of “virtuous people”.

Coup leader General Prayuth seems to support this: “We need to solve many issues — even the starting point of democracy itself — the election … Parliamentary dictatorship has to be removed.” If the military follow this path, they will extend to the House of Representatives the system in the Senate introduced after the 2006 coup, where appointed senators ensure a right wing majority. That anti-democratic Senate appointed judges and other officials lacked to undermine and bring down elected Red Shirt governments.

However, the military may find that “reforming” the constitution in this way encourages mass opposition. Thai working people have found a larger political voice and that they can elect governments that take some limited actions in their interests, and may refuse to accept the appearance of electoral democracy without any substantial content.

The red shirt leaders are trying to keep everything quiet, but they had no control over the wave of protests immediately after the coup.

Long term left activists say people need to be cautious and prepare for a long struggle that can build towards another mass uprising, such as in 1973, 1992 and 2010. Their forces are small, and the labour movement is small and divided. However, huge numbers of Thais are angry that their electoral wishes keep being overturned by the military and reactionary mobilisation. The large numbers who have been prepared to protest is a good sign for the chance to build a larger, more powerful pro-democracy movement. To achieve lasting gains, a movement is needed that can mobilise workers around their own interests, rather than relying on the big business-oriented Red Shirt leadership.

Solidarity actions internationally have been small and uncoordinated.

The labour movement around the world needs to work to organise solidarity. A good first step would be an international day of action.

**Milliband calls for “proper” Orgreave investigation**

By Phil Grimm

Ed Miliband has called for a “proper investigation” into police conduct during the bloodbath confrontation at Orgreave during the 1984-85 miners’ strike. The “Battle of Orgreave” saw thousands of police violently confront picketing miners in South Yorkshire, leading to thousands of arrests and injuries. Almost a hundred pickets were then arrested and charged with riot, unlawful assembly and other offences. However, when the cases came to trial, all collapsed and were dropped, undermined by fabricated or non-existent evidence.

Since then, campaigners have been waging a long fight for justice for the miners and their supporters who were physically beaten, maimed and tortured in the press and fitted up in court. On 14 June, a mass picnic and festival took place at Orgreave to commemorate the event.

For decades, the Labour Party has been half-hearted at best in its support. The Labour leaders’ new statement is a significant step forward — presumably the passage of time and the overwhelming weight of evidence has made criticism of the South Yorkshire police safe enough even for Miliband.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission says it is still “scoping” evidence for an investigation.

**Nazis organising in universities**

Warwick Anti-Racism Society, supported by Warwick University UCU, organised a demonstration on 12 June, in protest against the rising presence of far-right extremists on their campus. Over 200 students and trade union activists attended to oppose National Action, a group who want to “ethnically cleanse the UK of Jews and non-whites”. They are targeting universities because, according to their strategy pack, if they cannot tap into this market then they cannot succeed at all.

It is estimated that there are only 60 members nationally, but have caused enough trouble to gain national press attention.

National Action also held a demonstration in Liverpool earlier this month.

**NCAC plans for national demo**

On 14-15 June, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts hosted two national meetings, Classroom Struggle and the Free Education Meeting.

Speakers involved in the debate at Lambeth College opened the first event. Discussions throughout the day ranged from looking at the class struggle from a gendered perspective, anti-racism campaigning and living wage struggles on campus.

The second event saw a broad group of activists vote on a set of action points, mandating those present to: contact the press as many as possible for a national demonstration next term, to make a promotional film for free education and to ask NUS to call a national free education meeting as part of its summer training, amongst others.

Despite the turn-out being unimpressive, the discussions were more sharply towards class struggle, direct action and the idea that this is all part of a fight for a better society.
The collapse in Iraq

By Martin Thomas

On Wednesday 11 June, the Al-Qaeda-oriented Sunni Islamist group ISIS seized control of Iraq's second-biggest city, Mosul.

It has taken several other cities in the Sunni-majority north and west. Before 11 June it had already controlled Fallujah and much of Ramadi, and of significant areas in Syria.

Nadia Mahmood of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq told Solidarity: “What’s going on now with ISIS is a new phase of the sectarian violence which reached its peak in 2006-7 with the bombings in Samarra”.

That simmering sectarian civil war died down in 2007 and after. But, said Nadia: “After the Arab Spring [in 2011], the Sunni [minority in Arab Iraq] became more assertive.”

“In 2013, Iraq’s Shia-Islamist prime minister Maliki ended the [peaceful, and not sharply Islamist] protest camps outside the roads to Fallujah and ignored their demands.”

“Now in 2014, after the election two months ago, Maliki wants to stay in power and has marginalised even the other Shia parties. Because of the sectarian nature of the government, this sort of violence will happen again and again. Socialists need to call for a secular state.”

“The left and the labour movement in Iraq are not powerful right now, so first of all we need a secular state without religious identity which will give us ground to build. The target now is to end the sectarian nature of the state”.

Some of the roots of this collapse of the Iraqi state lie in what the USA did after invading Iraq in 2003. It disbanding much of the Iraqi state machine, including low-ranking people, and promoted “de-Ba’athification”.

HEGEMONY

At first the USA hoped that pro-US and relatively secular people like Ahmed Chalabi and Iyad Allawi would create a pro-US Iraqi government.

But those neo-liberals turned out to be good at schmoozing US officials while in exile, hopelessly at winning support from Iraqis in Iraq. Amid the chaos and rancour which followed the invasion and the destruction of everyday governance, the mosques and the Islamist factions won hegemony.

The US adapted and worked with people like Maliki. As Aso Kamal of the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan told Solidarity: “The Americans made a political system that depended on balancing three ethnic and sectarian identities.

“Iraq had been a modern society, with sectarian divisions not so deep. These events are the product of the new system America brought to Iraq. Especially with other powers like Turkey and Iran intervening, seeking their allies within the Iraqi system, it has been a disaster”. Now Saudi Arabia has seized on the current crisis to call for the fall of Maliki and his replacement by “a government of national consensus”.

Nadia Mahmood explained: “I think some of the Ba’thists saw the de-Ba’athification policy as targeting Sunni more than Ba’thists. In fact there were Shia Ba’thists who held powerful positions in the state, and they were protected because they were Shia.

“So the Sunni Ba’thists went to the Sunni side and the Islamist side, not the Ba’thists side. They held to their religious identity”.

According to Aso Kamal, Maliki’s government is seen as a Shia government, and that rallies groups like ISIS and ex-Ba’thists against it.

“For us in Workers’ Liberty, the horrible events confirm the arguments we made during the previous simmering sectarian civil war in Iraq especially (2006-7) for slogans of support for the Iraqi labour movement and democracy against both the US forces and the sectarian militias, not the negative slogan “troops out”. The two-word recipe “Troops out” then certainly entailed sectarian collapse like this one, only worse.

Now it is happening, even those who previously most ardently insisted that anti-Americanism must be the first step, and everything else could be sorted out later, dare not hail the ISIS advance and the Shia counter-mobilisation as “liberation” or “anti-imperialism”.

CORRUPTION

Of course, rejecting the slogan “troops out” did not mean supporting the US, any more than being dismayed at the ISIS advance means endorsing Maliki.

The sudden collapse of the Iraqi army as the relatively small ISIS force advanced shows how corrupt and discredited the state has become.

Nadia Mahmood explained: “Soldiers from Mosul were saying that even when ISIS were still far away from the city, the leaders of the army took off their military clothes and left the soldiers. The Mayor of Mosul told the soldiers to leave. Some of the soldiers are saying that there was a deal”.

The knock-on effect of the ISIS victories is a sharpening on the other side of Shia sectarianism. As Nadia Mahmood says: “Now the Shia political parties are becoming closer to each other and calling for resistance. There is a sectarian agenda against the Sunni”. Aso Kamal adds: “Sistani and Maliki are also calling for a holy war. This is taking Iraq back centuries. It could become like Somalia. That will destroy the working class. It is a very dark scenario”.

Workers’ Liberty believes that defence of the labour movement in Iraq, which will be crushed wherever ISIS rules and in grave danger where the Shia Islamists are mobilising, should be a main slogan now, alongside the call for a secular state. “ISIS”, says Aso Kamal, “have announced what they are going to do. Women must stay at home. Nothing must be taught in schools outside the Quran. There will be no freedom of speech. They are like the Taliban”. “I’m not sure how ISIS came to Iraq”, said Nadia Mahmood, “and whether they are popular even amongst Sunnis. Maybe they are allied with the Ba’thists. But there are more Sunnis supporting them. Many Sunnis seem very scared and oppose ISIS. It is horrible what is going on”. But, now they have power and access to big arsenals, “ISIS may keep hold of the Sunni cities, such as Mosul and Tikrit, for some time. It’s obviously not the same for Baghdad. Bringing in Iranian groups to fight ISIS will only encourage sectarian discourse and maybe accelerate Shia-Sunni polarisation. Already Maliki is accused by ISIS, and by the Ba’thists, of being an Iranian agent. Whether Iranian intervention calms the situation or it worsens it is unclear.

“Many people in Iraq would prefer the United States to attack ISIS. They have come all the way from Mosul to 60 km outside Baghdad, killing in their wake. I don’t know if they will stay longer how many crimes they will commit, how many tragedies are going to happen. People in Baghdad feel very scared now”.

That doesn’t mean endorsing US bombing. The US’s 12 years of bombing in Afghanistan have not installed a secular state, but rebuilt a base for the once-discredited Taliban.

As Aso Kamal explains: “The Americans have a common front against ISIS now. But the Americans are playing with both sides. They do whatever they think will stabilise the region and the markets, and ignore the future of the people. In reality, they are supporting reactionary forces in Iraq. “The effect of the developing sectarian war will be to inflame nationalism in Kurdistan. Already the KDP and the PKK [the main parties] are asking people to support them in order to keep the territory which Kurdish forces have conquered”.

For the Worker-communist Party of Kurdistan, “the main issue is to keep Kurdish separate from this war. We say there should be a referendum and independence for [Iraqi] Kurdistan”.

Ukraine: talks and tanks

By Colin Foster

On 13 June newly-elected Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko and Russian president Vladimir Putin spoke for the first time on the phone.

The Russian government has, for now, rejected calls from the pro-Russian separatists in control in Donetsk (eastern Ukraine) to send Russian troops into Ukraine.

Yet in several respects a negotiated settlement looks somewhat further away.

Russia has stopped gas supplies to Ukraine, citing unpaid bills. Ukraine has lodged a counter-claim for a refund on gas supplies for which, it says, it paid too high a price. Russia says it has enough gas in stock to last some months, and both Russia and Ukraine say that supplies of Russian gas through Ukraine to Western Europe will continue.

The Kiev government continues small-scale military action to regain territory in the east, and claims to have regained control in Mariupol. More people have died in the fighting.

The Ukrainian government, backed up by US authorities and partially by NATO, which has published satellite photos, claims to have spotted three Russian tanks in operation in eastern Ukraine.

Putin's aim is probably a deal giving Russia guarantees that it will not lose control of the whole of Ukraine, but the separatist regime in Donetsk is useful to him as a fallback and bargaining counter.

We support the right of Ukraine to national self-deter-
Planning for May 2015

Workers' Liberty
By Martin Thomas

Solidarity and Workers' Liberty activists will seek in the May 2015 general election to work with other socialists in the Labour Party and in the labour movement to create a clear socialist voice within the campaign to win a Labour government.

As against Ukip, the Tories, the Lib-Dems, possible Tory-Ukip or Tory-Lib-Dem coalitions, or a possible Labour-Lib-Dem coalition, we are in solidarity with the broad labour movement and its desire for a Labour government.

Yet Labour leaders say they will continue cuts, and are designing policies for government through unaccountable ca-

bals rather than democratic debate in the labour movement. A campaign is also necessary to promote working-class and socialist measures, as demands for the labour movement to press upon the Labour leaders, and as policy for working-class struggle under and against a new Labour government.

We will ask other socialist groups to join us in this campaign.

The campaign does not rule out Workers' Liberty, or other groups within the campaign, supporting good non-Labour left candidates where they can advance socialist ideas and not help the Tories.

However, the prospects on those lines are poor. Despite in-

vesting much effort and money, the TUSC coalition run by the Socialist Party and the RMT union had poor results on 22 May. That was true even in areas like Lewisham and Covent-

try, where before 2010 the Socialist Party had for two decades had a number of councillors, who stood as socialists and not just on the minimal anti-cuts platform of TUSC.

Vladimir Derer, strategist of Labour's left

In the early 1980s, the forerunners of Solidarity and Work-

ers' Liberty both worked closely with Labour left strategist Vladimir Derer, and debated sharply with him. Here we print a tribute to Vladimir, who died on 10 June, by Jon Lansman, a self-described ‘Dererite’.

By Jon Lansman

Vladimir Derer, who was the leading figure in the Cam-
paign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) for forty years after its foundation in 1973, has died at the age of 94.

Although almost unknown, other than amongst Labour ac-
tivists, he was the Labour left’s leading strategist at the height of its influence in the 1970s and 1980s. His strategic vision made CLPD, the most effective organisation on the Labour left through to the New Labour years and the present.

Tony Benn was rightly regarded as the Labour left’s out-

standing leader and communicator of the period but he was often wrongly credited with being the architect of the move-

ment for democratic reform within the party. That role was performed by Vladimir Derer.

Without Vladimir, there would have been no mandatory reselection of MPs, no electoral college in which Tony Benn could come within a whisker of winning the deputy leader-

ship of the party and in which Ed Miliband was to win the leadership. Those two reforms together with the unrealised objective of Labour’s manifesto being determined by its elected executive were CLPD’s core objectives through the 1970s.

Immediately after the victories on mandatory reselection and the wider franchise for the election of the leader, the 1980s, CLPD was, at Vladimir and his wife Vera’s instigation, the first organisation on the Labour left to take up the repre-

sentation of women and BME communities within the party, and amongst its candidates for public office.

In the long period from 1981 until 2010 in which the gains of the Labour left were gradually reversed, in which internal party elections and selections gradually replaced socialists with careerists, it was Vladimir’s tenacity and strategic lead-

ership which kept CLPD going. Although the left in a depowered state by the end of Blair’s premiership, demoralised and driven into opposition to the disastrous Iraq war, to pri-

vatisation and to neoliberalism, it was not nearly as weak as it would otherwise have been. In 2010, it helped Ed Miliband to victory over his brother.

Although Vladimir’s leadership of CLPD was never dis-

puted, that is not to say that his views went unchallenged or without debate — a process that Vladimir would always en-

sage and watch rather than from reading, and

com, that is not to say that his views went unchallenged or without debate — a process that Vladimir would always en-

sage and watch rather than from reading, and

The basic problem of the Left [is] … its unwillingness and therefore inability to come to terms with the political environment of bourgeois democratic institutions which constitute the frame-

work for activity … [and have] displayed a degree of stability quite unexpected by those who prophesied their inevitable collapse. …[Their survival] cannot be put down just to the ‘betrayal’ of the leaders of mass working class parties … the fact that the great majority of members of these parties chose to follow reformist lead-

ers rather than ‘revolutionary’ critics was not accidental”.

Vladimir rejected both the traditional left reformist faith that radical change was possible through socialist activities within the Labour Party, and the faith of those to the left of Labour in the transformational potential of “mass movements, springing up spontaneously in places of employment and within working class communities. Such movements would create [their] own organs of political power, by-pass representative parliamen-

tary institutions, come into conflict with them and ultimately re-

place them.

Instead, Vladimir believed the left should take parliamen-

tary democracy seriously but needed to focus on winning the support of the Labour Party membership to a socialist pro-

gramme by building a rank and file organisation which was

No2EU did very badly (0.2%), and on a platform which we consider not left-wing. Left Unity did little on 22 May. It looks like doing little in May 2015, and that little on a blunted “broad left” platform.

On the labour movement in previous elections, we believe that for socialists to go out seeking sponsors, getting motions in support through labour movement bodies, producing leaflets, asking trade-union bodies to use their text and their demands in communications to members around the elec-

tion, and running street stalls, while backing a Labour vic-

tory, is the best way to get socialist ideas heard at election time.

A basic decision on these lines was made by a national Workers’ Liberty meeting on 14 June. We will now set about discussions with other socialists about how best to shape and launch the effort.

“opposed to the leadership but built on a programme that at any
given time is acceptable to the mass of the party’s individual and af-
filiated membership.”

If the Labour left doesn’t do that, then, like the left outside Labour, they are relying on “being rescued from their chronic political impotence by spontaneously arising mass movements.” A radical reforming government, however, elected on such a programme, pushing beyond the limits of a capitalist frame-

work, will provoke a crisis which will create the potential for radical change. Where this disappointed others on the Labour left was the requirement to put aside campaigning objectives which were not capable of winning a majority. There is no purpose to generalised socialist propaganda.

Going beyond what the majority are capable of accepting, given their existing level of consciousness, only serves to alienate people and results in a failure to win that majority.

DERERITES

Many of us who worked with Vladimir came to share this outlook. We may call ourselves Bennites, but in many ways we are really Dererites.

The left-riding priority in intra-party campaigning is cre-

ating the organisation necessary to win a majority of the party to the required programme. Sometimes this did create some tension between Vladimir and Tony Benn, whose out-

look was rather different. It was the conflict between on the one hand a preacher, a prophet, essentially a Christian socialist, who had “lived in the oral tradition, learning from listen-

ing and watching rather than from reading, and communicating by speaking rather than writing”, and on the other hand a strategist, an organiser, essentially a Marxist, who was steeped in political theory and the organisa-
tional requirements for socialist transformation. But Vladimir was one of a tiny number of people Tony trusted who would also express strong disagreement with him.

Vladimir Derer, like Tony Benn, was the son of a cabinet minister. His father, van Dérer, had been a Social Democratic

minister. His father, van Dérer, had been a Social Democratic

minister in various Czech governments from 1920 until the Munich agreement between Hitler, Chamberlain et al in 1938. He was involved in the anti-fascist resistance in Prague and interned in Theresienstadt as a result but survived to chair the Czechoslovakian Labour Party until the Communist Party consolidated its control in 1948.

Vladimir, himself, a nineteen year-old with Trotskyist sym-

pathies at the time, escaped in 1939 via Poland to Britain. His Jewish girlfriend and other friends with whom he travelled were denied visas, and Vladimir was able to obtain one only because of his father’s reputation.

Following military service, working as a translator and as a courier, he didn’t settle into a life of political activ-

ity, supported by his second wife, Vera, until well into his middle years. Although he had been involved in Trotskyist poli-

tics in the late 1940s, he was politically inactive for many years until he joined the Labour Party in the early 1960s.

Thereafter, it became his life’s work.

• Abridged. Full article: bit.ly/v-derer
End the pay freeze!

Senior bosses in the NHS have enjoyed an average pay rise of 6.1% over the last two years. Some have also received bonuses of up to £400,000, more than double the annual salary of many frontline NHS staff.

A Daily Mirror study showed the overall increase in non-basic pay (bonuses, overtime, and other perks) for senior NHS staff in 2013 was 36%. Meanwhile, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has refused to follow the advice of the NHS Pay Review Body and give frontline workers a pay increase. The Review Body was recommending just one per cent. Even that was too much for a government committed to driving down working-class living standards.

The announcement should give added impetus to the developing public sector pay dispute. Unison, the biggest public sector union, meets in Brighton this week (15-20 June) for its Local Government sector and National Delegate Conference, where a fightback on pay will be discussed. Its local government members have already been balloted for strikes, with results due back on 23 June. Members of the GMB, Unite, PCS, NUT, and FBU across the public sector are expected to join a mass strike on pay on 10 July.

Unison’s May 2014 Health sector conference also voted to ballot for strike action on the issue. The union has dragged its feet on preparing the ballot and cannot now bring NHS members out to join the 10 July strike. Activists in the NHS should push for that ballot to take place as soon as possible, and organise local actions such as lunchtime rallies in support of the 10 July strike.

NHS bosses are far from unique in the public sector. The Chief Executives of some local councils are paid nearly £300,000 per year, more than 16 times what a council worker should earn the “London Living Wage” rate of £8.80 an hour would earn.

Transport for London Commissioner Peter Hendy is paid more than £600,000 per year, 4.5 times more than the Prime Minister, 22 times more than a London Underground Customer Service Assistant, and 35.5 times more than a cleaning worker. When Tube unions proposed cutting senior management pay as a way to avoid the alleged necessity to close ticket offices and cut staffing levels, they were told by bosses that TL and LU management pay wasn’t high enough!

The low pay crisis is a key terrain of class conflict in the working-class living standards. It is not only about money, but to make strikes part of ongoing programmes of action, 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 and discussed by members.

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 be necessary to push the government back.

Workers in every sector should formulate clear demands for their disputes.

On the strike day activists should work to ensure the maximum participation of members, so they are not merely the foot soldiers of the union leaders.

In 2011 activists in some cities successfully held strike day members’ meetings prior or after rallies. At these meetings members can discuss the dispute, the tactics, and what to be done next.

Socialists and trade unionists should use the opportunity of up to a million workers being mobilised for strike action to build confidence, win the argument about why and how we should fight, and start to organise local disputes so members are not demobilised between national strike days.

Build 10 July public sector strike

Up to a million workers may be on strike on 10 July. The strike could include Unison, GMB and Unite members in local government, the National Union of Teachers, the Fire Brigades Union and Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS).

This is no small thing, either in numbers or significance. This will be the first time there has been a large scale public sector strike involving more than one sector since the 2011 pensions dispute. That battle ended in defeat, and activists in public sector unions will 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.

In some unions this pattern continues until this day. 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 and discussed by members.

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Boris’s water cannon aimed at protests

Mayor of London Boris Johnson has bought three water cannons for the Metropolitan Police despite the use of these weapons not yet being authorised by the government.

Johnson claims that the use of water cannons could prevent disorder such as the London riots of 2011; it will allow the Met to counter-act any rioting this summer.

Water cannons are ill-suited for use on fast-moving groups of looters. Indeed, during the London riots, senior Met officers dismissed the usefulness of water cannon for preventing looting or vandalism. Water cannons are only really effective against stationary crowds, as a means of dispersing a static or slow-moving demonstration.

While Johnson plays on public fears about smashed shops and burnt high streets, the real targets of the Met’s water cannon will be political protesters.

Water cannon are presented as a safe means of forcing a crowd to disperse, as a compromise enabling police to force people to retreat without physical harm. This is nonsense. The cannons work by firing highly-pressurised water at sufficient speed to make people flee or be knocked from their feet. Any weapon capable of knocking people to the ground has the potential to cause serious injury.

In 2010, pensioner Dietrich Wagner was blinded whilst protesting in Stuttgart, his eyes knocked out of their sockets by water cannon. The cannon that did the damage was the same model that Johnson has bought.

Many London Assembly members opposed the acquisition of the cannons. Of the 25 members of the Greater London Authority (not including the Mayor) 20 voted against the purchase. Considering that Home Secretary Theresa May hasn’t even granted police the power to use water cannon in England and Wales, Johnson’s behaviour is not only undemocratic, but a gamble.

The media have speculated that the Mayor may be trying to force the May’s hand, or to pose as being tougher on law-on-order, so that he can outmanouevre May in a Tory party leadership challenge. He is playing a dangerous game — but with our safety and our right to protest.
Art and Anarchy

Charlotte Zeleus and Dave Hetherington review Comics Unleashed; Art and Anarchy in the UK an exhibition now running at the British Library.

According to the curators Paul Gravett and John Harris Dunning and artistic director David McKean, the exhibition explores the British Library’s collection of comics and plumbs the depths of private collections, to show the history of British sequential art, as well as its writers and artists. It partially succeeds.

The curators wanted to show the political history of comics, the medium’s ability to subvert, and its role as a medium for analysing class, sexuality and ethnicity, not to mention the many occasions when it has become the subject of political battles.

The exhibition has some very interesting items in it but the curators tried to cover too much in one exhibition. By trying to be a comprehensive portrayal and analysis of both the political nature of comics and the history of British comics, the exhibition ultimately detracts from both.

Many will recognise the Guy Fawkes mask as a symbol of the Occupy movement, originating in Alan Moore and Dave McKean’s dystopian graphic novel V for Vendetta. The exhibition plays on this to great effect. Every corner seems to be hosting its own 4-chan convention. Perhaps this highlights a flaw in the nature of the exhibition; if the intent is to explore the depth and variety of material, why concentrate so much on texts such as this and Watchmen? Moore himself has expressed dissatisfaction that the medium has moved on from what he once memorably described as “a bad mood I was in fifteen years ago.”

Thankfully the curators do look at other comics and graphic novels that either reflected and analysed social and political situations of the time or subtly explored and parodied them through representations of all too familiar dystopian or utopian futures.

The savage (and often unnoticed) satire of 2000AD is represented by the seminal Judge Dredd fighting rival burger chain worshipping communities in a storyline so near the knuckle that publisher IPC allegedly had to run a free advert for Green Giant Corn in order to escape a lawsuit. This history is linked to the massively influential International Times, published from the 60s to early 90s.

Better still, the curators publicise the work of lesser known political comics, such as AARGH! (Artists Against Racist Rampant Government Homophobia) which was published by the (mainly) women’s publishing group Fanny was ironically shoved in a corner. The same collective published an anthology called Voyeuse: Women view Sex which was not featured. Much of this material is rare but there is at least some to choose from. However the exhibition did feature a copy of Sourceam, a comic published by women from the late 70s that often featured feminist sex education and commentary.

There is an immovable wealth of material out there from some of the first positive representations of working-class people, through the boundary-pushing late 1960s and into the anti-nuclear sentiments of the 1980s.

The last 25 years have seen British comics reach a similar standard to that which they’re held in France and Japan. Comics continue to be a wonderfully amenable medium for analysis of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity.

they’re the product of an industry riddled with misogynistic attitudes, as regularly documented by the excellent Comics Alliance website.

We were excited to see the “Let’s talk about sex” section, expecting to see examples and analysis of comics that have explored gender and sexuality from a liberatory and critical angle. However the exhibition focuses much more on the use of comics for erotica written by men for men, largely in the 1970s.

Whilst we do not cheerlead for the prudish anti-sex brigade, we feel the concentration on this material marginalised and patronised the ever-expanding number of comics about sex written by women about their own sexuality. In a different section, a copy of Ceasefire magazine published by the (mainly) women’s publishing group Fanny was ironically shoved in a corner. The same collective published an anthology called Voyeuse: Women view Sex which was not featured. Much of this material is rare but there is at least some to choose from. However the exhibition did feature a copy of Sourceam, a comic published by women from the late 70s that often featured feminist sex education and commentary.

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Ritzy campaign

A socialist who works at the Ritzy Picturehouse cinema in Brixton, South London and is involved in the workers’ struggle for a Living Wage spoke to Solidarity in a personal capacity.

What’s the nature of the workforce at the Ritzy?

Almost everyone is part-time; a lot have other jobs or projects they’re working on. Some people have been there as long as 15 years, and then it’s a huge range downwards. A lot of us haven’t been there very long; me less than a year. But compared to many workplaces the Ritzy is an okay place to work, so it doesn’t tend to stay.

We’re mostly young. There are people from loads of different countries, mainly in Europe. The workforce is gender balanced and it’s the only place I’ve worked where I’ve not experienced sexism. A lot of the managers are women.

There are some managers who are sympathetic to the workers, but they’re not the ones making decisions — or I should say implementing decisions. These are people who we have democracy at work could do a decent job in cooperation with the workforce, but obviously that is not how things work under this system.

By the way, when the Living Wage dispute began, management suspended recruitment, but they’ve now started hiring again.

How has the Living Wage struggle developed?

I started working at the Ritzy in November, about a month after the dispute began. There were repeated meetings between the company, BECTU [the broadcasting and entertainment union] officials and our reps, and various so-called compromise proposals were floated. What’s good is that there were frequent report backs and discussions at membership meetings, with the workers taking decisions.

The offers involved different permutations of performance-related pay. We oppose this for a number of reasons. One is that, even with these schemes, we wouldn’t have come all the way up to £8.80 an hour. In any case, as a basic minimum, we want the full Living Wage as a right — for ourselves and for all Picturehouse workers.

Also, the performance schemes involve ridiculous assessments of how hard we’re pushing various offers onto customers. I don’t think it’s good for customers when we are constantly pushing more stuff and the most expensive options. It reminds me of when I worked at WH Smith and we had to irritate everyone by offering them a discount bar of chocolate.

That’s capitalism, isn’t it? It’s not what’s best for workers or customers but what’s best for making a profit.

Eventually it became obvious the negotiations were in an impasse, and we moved to strike action. We’d had six strike days, I think, plus days when we didn’t strike but organised protests. The strikes have been solid and effective, closing the cinema each time, with well-attended, lively picket lines.

Since the strikes began, management have cut off negotiations. They also refused to give us the pay rise other Picturehouses have had — 29p an hour, which is about four percent. Last week, we were supposed to have negotiations, but they cancelled them at the last minute and imposed the pay rise. But it didn’t weaken us: it feels like they’re in disarray and also the rush of back pay means workers feel more confident to carry on. It’s nice to see management tripping over their feet!

Is this your first strike? What has it been like?

Yeah, this is my first strike. It’s my first experience of workplace organisation. My mum’s a teacher and has been on
n: “unleashing passion and creativity”

strike lots of times, and obviously I know all about exploit-
ation from my previous jobs — mostly in shops. As a socialist,
I pieced it together, and in fact my dissertation at university
was about exploitation and inequality at work. But until I had
the experience of getting organised, it was all a bit abstract.

I’m aware how lucky I am, in a way. How many socialists
of my generation have been able to take part in a vibrant
working-class struggle? Even most young workers in estab-
lished organised sectors like public services don’t have that
experience.

The main thing that has struck me is the strength and
depth of the relationships built between Ritzy workers dur-
ing the dispute. It’s far more intense than the ordinary expe-
rience of just working together. And also the unleashing of
people’s passion and creativity when they try to gain some
control in their workplace. Up and down the country there
are people bitching at watercoolers, but they don’t see how
it’s political or imagine they could do anything to change
things. When you get organised, it’s different.

I was lucky but there’s nothing special about the Ritzy.
Everyone needs to think about how they can begin to organ-
ise at work.

Has it been a politicising experience?

This has confirmed my convictions, strengthened them and
made them far more concrete.

I think working-class politics starts with the relationship
between workers and management. If you can organise and
make demands on management, why not the government?
After all, we are the majority and we produce the wealth that
makes society run. And workers’ organisation, when it’s
strong, gives a workable model of how democracy could be
made far more real than it is under capitalism.

There’s another thing I think is interesting, which is the
idea that you can — you should — have a decent and fulfill-
ing life regardless of what you do. We’re constantly encour-
aged to think we’re going to strike it rich in the future, or at
least that we’re going to move on to something better. And
that works very well for capitalism, obviously, because it pre-
vents people from organising collectively for more and bet-
ter where they are right now. I recently told someone I just
worked in a bar, and he told me — don’t say that, there’s
nothing wrong with working in a bar. Be proud. He was ab-
solutely right. Getting organised at work is a big part of that.

If all workers were organised, then far more people would
be politically engaged, and engaged in the direction of left-
wing politics.

A few of the older workers were involved in a previous at-
tempt to unionise the Ritzy and improve our wages, but the
big majority of us have never been involved in a workers’
struggle before. So most people aren’t necessarily starting
from a political place but of course the dispute has been
politicising. Having a goal like the Living Wage means that
there’s a much easier starting place for thinking about poli-
tics.

Workers have got used to socialist groups visiting our
picket lines, and are interested, though the heavy sell we get
from the SWP is quite alienating.

What problems has the Ritzy struggle encountered?

I think the main one is stamina, keeping people going. Al-
though it’s been a wonderful experience, it hasn’t been easy.
This was my first workplace with a union, but before the dis-
pute it was the first time I didn’t feel like I needed one. Now
that’s changed. Management have us under pressure, and it’s
tough. We’re doing well at supporting each other and looking after
ourselves while keeping the momentum. One thing that
helps is the knowledge that this isn’t just about us. It’s part of
a wider struggle for all Picturehouse workers and in fact all
low paid workers.

How have you found BECTU?

Really good. It seems to me that Ritzy workers have been
steering our own struggle, and we’ve got support rather than
obstruction from our full time officials. I know there are hor-
ror stories in some other unions, but we’ve not had anything
like that. I don’t know if this is because BECTU’s size makes
grassroots control easier or what.

There seem to be the first shoots of progress in terms of
spreading the union to other Picturehouses. We’ve made
links at other cinemas in London and at least one other Pic-
turehouse in the north. Whenever we go to another cinema, we
strengthen our links. Protests and leafleting by support-
ers must help too.

What do you think it will take to win?

I sometimes think it’s a bit of a mystery why management
haven’t caved yet — surely they could save themselves
money and trouble by giving in to what is actually a very
modest demand. But I suppose they are afraid of us setting a
“bad example” to other Picturehouse workers and they want
to hold the line against the union and the threat of unionisa-
tion. After all, they have a lot of profits to lose!

The sale of the Picturehouse chain to Cineworld shows the
attitude of the people running it — they trade on the artsy,
even pseudo-ethical, Picturehouse brand, but what they’re
all about is money. Cineworld will be harder to crack, be-
cause it’s bigger and more corporate, but we can do it. We
need to keep the action going, get more solidarity and stay
determined. We’ve also decided call for a boycott of Picture-
houses, so actions outside the cinemas can help spread that.
We’ve had very positive coverage in the Evening Standard
and we’re even using Boris Johnson’s support for the Living
Wage to embarrass our bosses.

More importantly, we’ve had great support from cus-
tomers, from the community in Brixton and from other
unions, particularly in Lambeth. The links with UCU and
Unison at Lambeth College and the council have been par-
ticularly important: the Lambeth College dispute has had a
real impact on Ritzy workers.

The more solidarity we get and the more we give the
more confident we’ll be. So please invite a speaker, spread the word and help us win.

Boycott

Picturehouse!

Workers at The Ritzy, the Picturehouse Cinema in Brix-
ton, South London, have been striking over the com-
pany’s refusal to pay staff the London Living Wage.

The company likes to portray itself as progressive and
radical, nurturing independent talent and the arts — yet
nothing could be further from the truth. Picturehouses sold
to Cineworld in 2012, netting Managing Director Lyn
Goleby £9 million, and the group made £31 million in prof-
its. Yet they say they cannot afford to pay a living wage to
their staff.

The Ritzy has now imposed a 4% rise, leaving wages
below the poverty line. Almost all Picturehouse staff are
paid below the poverty line.

As a result, BECTU has called for a national boycott of
Picturehouse Cinemas until they resolve the dispute and
agree a deal with workers at The Ritzy.

Activists are organising a week of petitioning and
leafleting from 13-21 June.
Yes, Russia is imperialist!

By Dale Street

At critiqu eofcrisistheory.wordpress.com, Sam Williams has written 16,000 words to claim that Russia is not imperialist, even when its tanks are rolling through other nations.

He describes the old Stalinist states “the former socialist countries of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.” In those days there was “no true Soviet imperialism,” claims Williams, because “wealth was not accumulated in the form of capital, and therefore not in the form of finance capital — there was not a single kopek of finance capital.” Any other view is down to “imperialist Western propaganda and its bought and paid-for historians.”

And Russia retains its non-imperialism even after it has unambiguously reverted to capitalism. “Has the military-feudal imperialism of pre-1917 Russia been restored?” asks Williams. No, it’s not feudal. “(But it was not the feudal residues in Tsarist Russia which made Marxists of the time classify it as imperialist. It was its domination and exploitation of other nations).”

“What about a modernised Russian imperialism based on the rule of monopoly capitalism and finance capital?” He rejects this argument as well: Russia is “very poor in finance capital. … (Therefore) today’s Russia is very far indeed from becoming an imperialist country.”

This is really just a re-run of Williams’s denial of Stalinist imperialism. There was no finance capital in Stalin’s USSR, and therefore no Stalinist imperialism. Today’s Russia is “very poor” in finance capital, and therefore there is no Russian imperialism.

However, Williams’s equation of “imperialist” with “rich in finance capital” obliges him to classify Taiwan, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and New Zealand as imperialist powers.

Conversely, a state which oppresses and loots other nations remains benignly non-imperialist, provided only that its financial sector lags. (Like Japan or Italy or Spain or even the USA in the era of “high” imperialism before World War I). Whatever Russia does in Ukraine, it can’t be imperialist.

This pseudo-theoretical quackery serves as a licence for Williams to ignore Ukrainian reality.

The Maidan protests are dismissed by Williams as a homogenous right-wing reactionary mass. They had “a pro-imperialist, pro-Empire character from the beginning.” Participants in the protests had an outlook “similar to the mentality of the Tea Party in the USA,” the “leaders of the movement” were “Right Sector Thugs.”

Williams omits any mention of the interventions into the Maidan protests by anarchists, the far left and women’s groups. Williams has read a translated article by Volodymyr Ishchenko — but that seems to be the sum total of his reading of left analyses of the Maidan.

Russia’s “annexation” of the Crimea (scare-quotes Williams’s) could not be imperialist. Russia, being poor in finance capital, simply cannot be imperialist.

The fact that a majority in the Crimea voted in favour of being part of an independent Ukraine at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union. The fact that Russian troops seized airfields and other military installations in March. The fact that Russian ships blockaded the Ukrainian navy. The fact that the “referendum” merely rubber-stamped a fait accompli by the Russian state — all these facts are ignored by Williams. Instead, just as he blames German imperialism for Stalin’s mass deportations, so too he blames the Kiev government for Putin’s annexation of Crimea.

“When the Ukrainian far right wing came to power and Kiev made clear its plan to turn the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine into a persecuted minority and scapegoat, the Putin government felt it had no alternative but to allow the predominately Russian-speaking Crimea to join the Russian Federation.”

On May’s presidential election in Ukraine, Williams writes: “It seems that all anti-Maidan candidates were effectively banned”. They were all banned — apart from Petro Symonenko, Mykhailo Dobkin, Serhiy Tihipko, Renat Kuzmin and Oleg Tyagnyev. Tyagnyev stood down of his own accord, but no anti-Maidan candidates were banned, “effectively” or otherwise.

“Now vote was held in regions where anti-Maidan sentiment is strongest, such as Donetsk”, continues Williams, “there was a very low vote in the Donbass as a whole. This was anything but a free election.”

But the limitations on the freedom of those elections, and the “very low vote in the Donbass as a whole”, were both the product of the same phenomenon: the threat of violence (and actual violence) from Russian separatists made it physically dangerous or impossible to staff polling stations; voting papers were confiscated.

Williams notes that the far-right candidates of Svoboda and the Right sector each scored only around 1%. But that does not lead him to question the Russian separatists’ inescapable description of the Kiev government and President as a “Nazi junta” which is currently committing “genocide” in the south-east of the country at the behest of “imperialism.”

“The US- EU-NATO imperialist empire is taking full advantage of the traditions of the Ukrainian ‘Whites’ during the civil war that followed the 1917 Revolution”, writes Williams. In fact, Russian-separatist anti-Maidanists so admired by Williams stand in the tradition of the Whites.

Strelkov-Girkin, the separatists’ nominal military commander, is a self-proclaimed admirer of Denikin and the White Army. Borodai, “Prime Minister” of Donetsk, is a Russian nationalist and white-imperialist, according to Williams’s “people’s Governor” of Donetsk, describes himself as “a Russian nationalist” involved in a battle for “the true Russian-Orthodox-Slav cause.”

The ideological patrons of the Russian-separatist movement are Alexander Prokhanov and Alexander Dugin: ultranationalists if not outright fascists, anti-Semitic, and admirers of a fascistic strong state combined with an “ethno-social Cossack way of life.”

Prokhanov and Dugin are founding members of the Izborsky Club, an ultra-Russian-nationalist “think tank.” Last year a branch of the Club was set up in Donetsk — with Gubarev as its president.

Williams concludes: “What many of the workers involved in the anti-Maidan movement really want is the restoration of the USSR. This is shown by the Soviet flags that compete with the tricolour flags of the bourgeois Russian Republic and the double eagles of the Russian nationalists.”

But it makes little or no sense to talk of an anti-Maidan “movement”. The Maidan protests brought tens and hundreds of thousands onto the streets. It was a genuine political movement. But in the south-east the protests have always been small, and firmly controlled by the separatist paramilitaries rather than having a political life of their own.

In reality, the anti-Maidan “movement” in the south-east is essentially a military organisation consisting of bodies of armed men, with a few self-proclaimed political leaders acting as their mouthpiece. They are fighting for the restoration of imperial Russia, not the restoration of the USSR. Thus, why’s that new political party launched by Gubarev is called: “Novorossiya”, after the old Tsarist-imperialist term for south and east Ukraine.

Contrary to Williams’s claim, waving old Soviet flags is not in “competition” with this political project. In fact, Stalinist rule is seen by Russian ultra-nationalists as a historical highpoint of Russian imperialist glory. And Stalin’s anti-Semitism reinforces their sympathies for him.

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A critique of “Orientalism” through the spirit of Marx

By Camila Bassi

“Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the fundamental Europe, the West, and all the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”),” Edward Said

Edward Said’s 1978 book Orientalism is a return to his conceptualisation of a dual camp schema of the world. It effectively inverts this dual camp schema.

Said opens his book with a quote by Karl Marx: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.” As if Marx wrote these words to condemn the Orient! In fact, as we’ll see, Marx wrote them about something else altogether.

Said thus sets himself up as presenting a necessary antidote to a paternalistic and patronising western system of political representation and domination, of which Marxism is a part.

Said attributes three interdependent terrains to Orientalism: the academic discipline of Orientalism and its research on the Orient and the Occident; a particular style of thought that differentiates, ontologically (on the nature of being) and epistemologically (on the theory of knowledge), “the Orient” and “the Occident”; and, commencing from the late eighteenth century, the corporeal institution that deals with the Orient “by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it.”

Said reviews Orientalism as a western-centric discourse employed first by British and French imperialisms and later by US imperialism, to dominate, restructure, and have authority over the Orient.

Orientalism is seen to be heavily imbued with geography, that is, imaginary spatial prejudices infused with power and exploitation, and a western-centric notion of development that is, imaginary spatial prejudices infused with power and exploitation.

NEAR EAST, ARAB WORLD, AND ISLAM

“Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma.” (Edward Said)

There is nothing, in and of itself, problematic about the above statement; its intended meaning is understandable even outside its related paragraph, chapter, and book, and yet Said’s Orientalism has given birth to a climate on the left based on statements to be all-too-swiftly labelled as “Islamicophobic” and racist.

The depiction of the Near East, the Arab world, and Islam by the contemporary Orientalist lens is regarded by Said as especially bad, for four reasons:

1. The weight of history in respect to anti-Islamic and anti-Arab prejudice;
2. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, or rather “the struggle between the Arabs and Israelis Zionism, and its effects upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large”;
3. A cultural vacuum that makes it impossible to discuss Islam or the Arabs in a way that identifies with either or is composed;
4. “Because the Middle East is now so identified with Great power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terrorist Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small.”

The historical relationship of Orientalism to Islam is explained as follows:

“To the West, […] Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity. To overcome […] the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges.”

In the contemporary hegemonic Western (specifically, American) popular culture of film and television, Said states, “the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty; […] lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world.”

The possibility of an independent vantage point and independent class politics is simply ruled out, since, “when Orientals struggle against colonial occupation, you must say (in order not to risk a Disneyism) that Orientals have never understood the meaning of self-government the way “we” do. When some Orientals oppose racial discrimination while others practice it, you say “they’re all Orientals at bottom” and class interest, political circumstances, economic factors are totally irrelevant […] History, politics, and economics do not matter. Islam is Islam, the Orient is the Orient, and please take all your ideas about a left and a right-wing, revolutions, and change back to Disneyland.”

But what does Said have to say of independent working class agency and self-government in the Marxist tradition? This leads us back to the quote at the start of Orientalism and to the substance of Said’s rebuke of Marx and Marxism.

SAID AND MARX

Three sources of Marx are directly referenced in Orientalism as the basis for Said’s critique of Marxism: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, The British Rule in India, and The Further Results of British Rule in India.

One sentence from The Eighteenth Brumaire is out plucked twice: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.” I will show just how much Said departs from, and subsequently exploits and distorts, the original meaning of this sentence.

Quoting briefly from Marx’s The British Rule in India and The Further Results of British Rule in India, Said problematises what he describes as the puzzelement of Marx’s paradoxical position on colonialism and the Orient. A puzzle, that is, until Said expounds that the Marxist discourse is inseparable from the Orientalist discourse:

“Karl Marx identified the notion of an Asiatic economic system in this 1853 analysis of British rule in India, and then put aside that immediately the human depredation introduced into this system by English colonial interference, rapacity, and outright cruelty. In article after article he returned with increasing conviction to the idea that even in destroying Asia, Britain was making possible there a real social revolution. Marx’s style pushes us right up against the difficulty of reconciling our natural repugnance as fellow creatures to the sufferings of Orientals while their society is being violently transformed with the historical necessity of these transformations.”

“All Marx’s economic analyses are perfectly fitted thus to a standard Orientalist undertaking, even though Marx’s humanity, his sympathy for the misery of people, are clearly engaged. Yet in the end it is the Romantic Orientalist vision that wins out.”

“The idea of regenerating a fundamentally lifeless Asia is a piece of pure Romantic Orientalism, of course, but coming from the same writer who could not easily forget the human suffering involved, the statement is puzzling.”

Rather than accept Said’s verdict that Marx incoherently and inconsistently abhors British imperial rule in India but ultimately welcomes it as a progressive force for necessary regeneration due to his heart being beaten by his head, which is inescapably arrested by the discourse of Orientalism, I will argue that Marx’s analysis and conclusion are not problematic.

THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE

Marx’s The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte is a brilliant polemic written in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution and Louis Napoleon’s seizure of power in France in December 1851. It is an exploration of the relationship between revolutions and the state.

Marx’s first theme is a general one, that of the connection between the force of human agency and the force of human history:

“[Humans] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.”

Marx issues a warning that revolutionary upheaval may dangerously and manipulatively dredge up the past, which the energy of a genuinely social revolution must resist. In this respect, he distinguishes between bourgeois revolutions and the critical praxis of proletarian revolutions:

“Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, swept from society some of their decayed, oppressive effects out each other; men [sic] and things seem set in sparkling brilliancy; ecstasy is the everyday spirit; but they are short-lived; soon they have attained their zenith, and a long crapulent depression lays hold of society before it learns soberly to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, criticise themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses, and paltrinesses of their first attempts […]”

Marx’s second theme is specific to the events proceeding the 1848 revolution, up to and including Louis Napoleon’s coup d’état of 1851, and the consequent banishment of the former gains of the revolution, such as “liberté, égalité, fraternité”:

“…All has vanished like a phantasmagoria before the spell of a man whom even his enemies do not make out to be a magician. Universal suffrage seems to have survived only for a moment, in order that with its own hand it may make its last will and testament before the eyes of all the world and declare in the name of the people itself. All that exists deservers to perish.”

The third theme is where Said’s quote from Marx — “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented” — is located, and it concerns the nature of Louis Napoleon’s state and the interrelated nature of its demographic base, the small-holding peasants:

“The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France’s bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants.”

Continued on page 10
“... They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through parlia-
ment or through a convention. They cannot represent them-
selves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time be their master, as in a doubly sys-
tematic way. They must give up one class without taking
from another. [...]. He would like to steal the whole of
France in order to be able to make a present of her to France
or, rather, in order to be able to buy France anew with French
money, for as the chief of the Society of 10 December he must
needs buy what ought to belong to him.”

So when Marx wrote the line, “They cannot represent them-
selves; they must be represented”, it directly refers to an
analysis of the isolated nature of the social base of Louis
Napoleon’s anti-democratic, bureaucratic state (the small-
holding peasants), a state that Marx critiqued as a violation
and deviation of the relations of the 1848 French Rev-
olution.

But when Marx’s quote is used by Said in Orientalism, it re-
alizes the complex manner of reference to an Orientalist dual
camp position that the poor and downtrodden Orient cannot
represent itself, thus “us” Marxists must do this job for
“them”.

**BRITISH RULE IN INDIA**

To understand more, it is necessary to point out the in-
herent characteristics of Marx’s general methodology and
intrinsic critique of capitalism.

Dialectical materialism is a means to understanding socie-
tal change, for history is not linear but thrusts forward in
a tense and fitful manner — reminiscent, for example, of Marx’s metaphors of revolutions in *The Eighteenth Brumaire
of Louis Bonaparte.* As Friedrich Engels reminds us about
dialectical philosophy in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of
Classical German Idealism* (1846-47) to buy French money,
for as the chief of the Society of 10 December he must
needs buy what ought to belong to him.”

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Tube cleaners locked out

By Darren Bedford

Tube cleaners in the RMT union have faced a lock-out as managers sent them home for refusing to use “biometric booking-on” machines.

The machines are intended to replace the existing system of booking on by signing in with station supervisors, and by phone. They require cleaners to enter a fingerprint.

The RMT has raised concerns about the use of the machines to collect data on cleaners, many of whom are migrant workers, as well as their possible use as a further tool for reducing station staffing levels. A ballot of RMT cleaner members working for ISS returned a large majority in favour of boycotting the machines.

Several cleaners came to work but insisted they would only book on using the existing system were sent home by ISS managers. The RMT said it was “in urgent talks” to resolve the situation, and that they would support any member facing a lock-out.

RMT members across London Underground are concerned that, if ISS are allowed to get away with using “biometric booking-on” systems, they will soon spread to other contractors and ultimately to directly-employed staff too.

Éamonn Lynch, Secretary of the RMT London Transport Regional Council said: “We are totally opposed to this technology, which we believe is a breach of civil liberties and a threat to jobs.”

Garden Halls strike solid

By Rachael Barnes

Outsourced cleaning, catering, and security workers at University of London’s Garden Halls (an intercollegiate halls of residence near King’s Cross) staged a 24-hour strike on 6 June and Thursday 12 June, picketing from 7am to midday each day and holding demonstrations at the University’s Senate House building.

The workers were demanding guarantees of redeployment following the announcement that Garden Halls was slated for closure, threatening 80 jobs.

The workers are members of the Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain (IWGB). They are also demanding that the University, and the outsourced contractor G2F Coely-Suez, negotiates with their union, which organises the majority of outsourced staff.

Currently, it only recognises Unison, which only represents a small minority of outsourced workers.

Next Tube cuts protest 25 June

By Darren Bedford

The Hands Off London Transport (HOLT) campaign organised a Day of Action on Friday 15 June, with leafleting, demonstrations, and other actions outside Tube stations including King’s Cross, Brixton, Wimbledon, Finchley Central, and Leytonstone.

The aim of the day was to raise awareness of London Underground’s plans to massively reduce staffing levels and close every ticket office on the Tube network.

The actions brought together RMT activists, disability rights campaigners, student unionists, community campaigners, as well as activists and supporters from other unions and left-wing groups.

Kate Kokkinou, Welfare and International Officer at University College London Union and HOLT Convenor said: “The demonstration was well attended by student activists, RMT activists, campaigners from the National League of the Blind and Disabled (NLBD), and Community, and also support from passersby who stopped to support the action.”

“The action went very well—we were leafleting and talking to members of the public about the proposed cuts: hundreds of leaflets were given out, and a small rally was had outside the Tube station.”

HOLT’s next planned action is a joint demonstration with the RMT outside Boris Johnson’s “State of London” event, at IndigO2 at the O2 Arena in Greenwich. The demonstration takes place at 6pm on Wednesday 25 June.

Mitie cleaners win on FGW

By Ira Berkovic

Cleaners employed by Mitie on a first Great Western contract have won a 6.75% wage increase, backdated to March 2013, and an increase to the London Living Wage from March 2015.

The workers, who are members of the RMT, have struck several times during the course of the dispute. Mitie made £10 million pre-tax profit last year, and paid out £20.6 million to its shareholders (an increase of 11.9% from the previous year).

The company’s highest-paid director is paid £1.37 million per year.

Solid strike at Lambeth

By a Unison member

Unison members at Lambeth College joined UCU members on strike last week (11 and 12 June) in protest against the introduction of working contracts for new staff.

Despite management’s attempts at turning the unions against each other (the new contracts would have little impact on Unison members), Unison joined UCU who have been on indefinite strike since 3 June.

The Unison branch at the college had not been on strike for decades previously, but had 35 people on the picket lines last week.

Unison branches are calling for members and supporters to lobby the AoC (National Association of College Principals) meeting, on Wednesday 18 June, on negotiations in further education.

A student rally has been organised at the Clapham Centre on Thursday 19 June, 12-2pm for students to find out why their tutors and staff are on strike.

● bit.ly/lam-cs

200 job-cuts at LeSoCo

By Gerry Bates

At least 95 jobs are to be cut by December at LeSoCo (Lewisham College including Southwark College), and three departments face risk of complete closure.

Management have predicted even more slashed to jobs, up to 200, over the next 3 years.

Planned restructuring of the departments and services could result in the jobs of Student Support staff being cut, which would affect mental health support provided for students.

This time last year, management announced 35 job cuts, severe changes to the floristry and science departments and the closure of two nurseries, resulting in 86% of UCU members who took part in the ballot to vote in favour of strike action.

The UCU branch at LeSoCo has organised a meeting to plan the defence of the community college.

Debate ruled out

By a conference delegate

Unison Local Government Conference (15-16 June) committed the union to fighting the greatest squeeze on wages since the 1870s but was prevented from discussing the tactics and strategy that can win.

Motions calling for a ballot of all school support staff and for ongoing campaigning including action short of strike after 10 July were ruled out by the Standing Orders Committee to avoid “issues of legality”. Delegates attempted to oppose this but were left to attempt discussion on this as part of the leadership backed main motion on pay.

Two fringe meetings on fighting for a fair deal provided a forum for discussion on how to take the pay campaign beyond a one or two day strike action.

Workers’ Liberty members distributed 500 bulletins and welcomed the opportunity to discuss and debate our ideas with delegates from across the country.
Across the world, capitalists are waging class war against the living standards and rights of workers and the oppressed. At Ideas for Freedom, the summer school on 3-6 July in London organised by the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty (AWL, which publishes Solidarity), we will be discussing how we can resist and fight back.

IFF will include lectures, debates, workshops, films and plenty of space for objections, dissent and criticism. It opens with a Thursday night (3 July) Radical Walking Tour of East London and a Friday night (4 July) meeting on “One hundred years of women’s struggles, 1914-2014”.

The weekend’s events are designed to help us “Educate, Agitate, Organise”.

There will be many other sessions, nudging 30 in all, on a range of subjects from TV crime dramas to economic theory. A plenary session will anchor the event in its central theme: “Their Class War and Ours”.

EDUCATE
Rosie Woods of AWL will debate “Left Foot Forward” editor James Bloodworth on whether socialists should seek to deal with tyranny and strife by advocating “humanitarian intervention” by big powers. Pat Murphy of AWL and Nigerian socialist Yemisi Ilesanmi will speak on socialists and religion. Jean Lane, Jill Mountford and Pete Radcliff of AWL and others will speak on the 1984-5 miners’ strike, and other sessions will cover World War One. Camila Bassi of AWL will speak on Marxism and “intersectionality”.

AGITATE
Gemma Short of AWL, John McDonnell MP, and James Elliot of Labour Students for Free Education will debate what demands we should seek to have the unions make of a Labour government. French socialist Yves Coleman, Greek socialist Theodora Polenta, and Matt Cooper of AWL will discuss the rise of the nationalist far right in Europe.

ORGANISE
Ruth Cashman of AWL and Lambeth Unison, Jason Moyer-Lee of IWGB, Holly Fishman-Crook from the Ritzy strike, and author Gregor Gall will discuss how to rebuild the unions. Cathy Nugent of AWL will debate ISN national secretary Simon Hardy and Edd Bauer from Birmingham Anti-Capitalists on the left after the SWP crisis.

The weekend sessions are at the University of London Union, WC1E 7HY. A creche and overnight accommodation are available free, and food will be available cheap. Tickets bought in advance cost £34 waged, £18 low-waged/uni students, £7 unwaged/school or college students. Book or inquire now at www.workersliberty.org/ideas

ABOVE: Shreya Paudel will speak on migrant struggles in Britain.
BELOW: Camila Bassi, James Bloodworth

LEFT: Jill Mountford
RIGHT: Simon Hardy

ABOVE: Pat Murphy
BELOW: Yemisi Ilesanmi