Solidarity
For social ownership of the banks and industry

WITH GREECE AGAINST THE BANKS

SEE PAGES 6-7
What is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty?

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

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

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

We fight for the labour movement to break with “social partnership” and assert working-class interests 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 strike, 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 working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all.
- 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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Lewisham Academies: “Don’t give up fighting”

Lewisham Academies: “Don’t give up fighting”

By Paul Vernadsky

The UK’s flagging fracking industry was dealt another blow this week, after Lancashire Council rejected a bid to resume drilling operations in the county.

On Monday 29 June, the council denied permission to shale gas firm Cuadrilla to frack at two sites between Preston and Blackpool after a robust campaign by local people and environmentalists.

The council opposed the application on the grounds that it would “lead to the industrialisation of the countryside and adversely affect the landscape character”.

The result was something of a relief for local councils, who had come under enormous pressure from the industry, with veiled threats of mass legal action if they opposed the planning application.

If they received the go ahead, it would have been the UK’s first fracking operation in four years, since the process was suspended in 2011.

The decision — the first of a number of planning applications — suggests that the tide is turning against dirty shale gas, which would have enormous consequences for carbon emissions if the industry gets the go ahead in the UK and across Europe. France, Bulgaria and the Netherlands currently have a moratorium on fracking.

The Scottish government also has a moratorium and the Welsh assembly may do the same. Although fracking is technically legal in Germany, protests have forced authorities to impose stiff controls. Governments in Denmark, Poland and the UK are actively backing the fracking industry.

The industry could face yet another setback, as the Information Commissioner has ruled that a heavily redacted government report from 2014 on the impacts of fracking on house prices, businesses and services in rural areas must be published in full.

The Lancashire decision is a boost for local anti-fracking groups and a big step forward for climate campaigners. However, the Westminster government is unlikely to walk away from the industry.

It has already begun to make the application process easier for the industry, as well as giving it political support (sadly now joined by the GMB leadership). The government has announced it will cut subsidies to onshore wind, which will probably ruin the wind industry in the UK.

Therefore it is vital for socialists and trade union activists to join the anti-fracking campaign and argue a working class-based orientation.

Airports Commission recommends third runway at Heathrow

bit.ly/1C2xYdq

LUKE MORGANS, A student at Hilly Fields School who was involved in the successful anti-academies campaign in Lewisham, spoke to Solidarity.

I wasn’t one of the very first students to be involved, I got involved when the nationwide student demonstrations in February and March.

I was already broadly left-wing, but I hadn’t done anything with my politics. It was separate from the workers’ campaign. Staff were told they weren’t allowed to talk to us about it. We knew our teachers were sympathetic, but they couldn’t go on our protests. We linked up at the community protests on some Saturdays and on strike days. The workers’ action had a good effect on the student campaign. It gave us a sense of momentum and solidarity.

We met students from other schools on the strike days and protests. Some students from Sedgehill were in touch. We didn’t manage to establish real links with Ladywell Fields. Our main links were with Prendergast Vale, where there was a very active campaign and where one of the leading student activists is based. We did some coordinated lunchtime protests with them.

I think Hilly Fields took a leading role because we were the only one of the schools with a sixth form. In fact, the number of sixth former involved wasn’t massive — we had much bigger numbers from lower years. But the sixth formers were important in giving people a lead and some confidence.

We had a student march between the two sites of Hilly Fields, which are near each other.

At the Vale they had a lunchtime march through the school corridors! That’s what led to people being threatened with suspensions, but the action went ahead and the suspensions were withdrawn. We organised student ballots at both schools, and at both it was 97 percent against academisation.

There was a protest at Leatherseiners, which is the “charity” owned by really rich people that partly runs our schools. That was organised by the unions, but a lot of students went along.

Students also went to the workers’ pickets lines on strike days, although smaller numbers.

Hardly anyone was in favour of academies, but lots of people said you can’t do anything, there’s big money involved, stuff like that. Once we had our second Hilly Fields protest, which was maybe 250 out of 800 students, people were impressed and became less sceptical that we might win.

We argued with people that “we’ve got to try”. If we don’t do anything, we definitely won’t stop it. If we fight we might win and if we lose at least we’ve held our heads up.

Before the election, we thought we’d have a much better chance with a Labour government; Vicki Foxcroft [MP for Lewisham Deptford] has supported us and she said she’d take it up with a Labour education minister. When the Tories won, we mostly thought that was that, we had no chance. I’d say the lesson is, don’t give up. Even if when something seems like a lost cause, it isn’t necessarily.

I think they’ll come back for us, particularly with the Tories urging them, but probably not next year. They’ll want to let the dust settle. They’ll probably try again in two or three years’ time. There’ll be a fight but it will be a hard fight, because academies are very much the national trend.

I’m sure some of the students involved in the campaign will continue to be politically active. Some are involved in climate change campaigns; some went on the anti-austerity demo on 20 June. A lot of the leading people are leaving school, but I’m sure some will be activists when they get to university. Perhaps some of the younger students will find ways to stay active too, and some of them will still be around if academisation comes back.

I think most of those involved were already left-wing but the experience of this struggle has made things sharper and more solid. I’m definitely leaning towards socialism.

If you’re involved in a fight, keep fighting. If you’re thinking about organising, give it a go. Good luck to you.

Anti-fracking campaigners celebrate after the decision by Lancashire county council

Blow to fracking

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Therefore it is vital for socialists and trade union activists to join the anti-fracking campaign and argue a working class-based orientation.
Bob Carnegie wins!

By Shane Bentley (MUA member, Sydney)

Workers’ Liberty supporter Bob Carnegie has been elected to the Queensland Branch Secretariat position of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) in this year’s Quadrennial elections. Bob assumes office for a four-year term on 1 July.

Bob was one of four challengers for the position vacated by retiring incumbent Mick Carr. Bob was defeated at the last MUA Quadrennial elections of 2011 by Carr by only two votes (504 to 506).

This time around, Bob won easily with a margin of fifty-six votes. The final tally was Bob with 315 votes, former Queensland Deputy Secretary Trevor Munday with 260 votes, seafarer Brian Gallagher with 170 votes, and “wharfe” (docker) Steve Cumberlidge with 116 votes.

Bob’s running mate Paul Petersen, who ran for the Queensland Assistant Branch Secretary spot, was not so fortunate. Paul, an outspoken delegate who was sacked by stevedoring company Patrick in 2009, an outspoken delegate who was sacked by stevedoring company Patrick in 2009, was beaten by Paul Galagher (446 votes to 319) with the other challenger Mark Maguire running a distant third.

The Queensland Assistant Branch Secretary position was easily won by current MUA Gladstone organiser Jason Miners, who beat his opponent Mark Keech by 588 votes to 277.

Bob started his campaign early on March 7, just one day after nominations had opened, with visits to work-sites in the north of Queens- land. Bob’s campaign saw him make several visits to numerous workplaces dotted up and down Queensland’s 2,000 km (1,250 mile) coastline.

Bob also published a four-page newsletter which was sent to every MUA member in Queensland. The newsletter outlined his policies for turning the MUA Queensland Branch into a genuine rank-and-file organisation.

POLICIES Policies included more regular visits to job sites have been promised. Full and effective defence of any MUA delegate faced with the sack; an unwavering support against casualisation; pushing for a 30-hour week with no loss in pay in the stevedoring sector (which is facing massive job losses due to automation); and genuine union democracy, including the rotation of elected officials so that they serve no more than two four-year terms in the same position.

Bob’s sense of working class internationalism saw him interrupt his election campaign to take part in a speaking tour of Britain. Bob spoke in mid-May at over a dozen public meetings and union conferences, including national conferences of the Fire Brigades Union and the Public and Commercial Services Union, along with numerous local meetings with Dave Smith from the Blacklist Support Group. The employers have already taken note of Bob’s victory. “Workforce Daily”, an employers’ news service from the Thomson Reuters group, has already spoken to Bob. Its 25 June edition referred to Bob as coming from a “lost time of union working-class militancy” and a “very solid revolutionary socialist background” that he is proud of.

The article concluded by saying that Bob believes that “society should be based on human need not human greed”. • bobraustralia.com • www.facebook.com/bobraustralia

Mobilising for a right to strike!

By Ira Berkovic

Both RMT and ASLEF’s tube strike ballots (see page 11) met the arbitrary and hypocritical threshold of the Tories plan to impose: both had turnouts of over 50%, and both had majorities of more than 40% of all those eligible to vote.

It is a superb symbolic and rhetorical victory for the RMT, against whom much of the right-wing ire about “disruptive” strikes is focused, that their highest-profile ballots since the new laws were proposed, on Network Rail and now London Underground, have cleared the Tories’ thresholds. It gives an immense democratic mandate to the LU strikes, even on the Tories’ turf. But justifiable pride at having returned such results should not get in the way of a militant campaign to stop the imposition of new laws. RMT’s AGM discussed, and passed unanimously, several resolu-

By Bob Carnegie

Today, Wednesday 1 July, sees me take up of- fice as the Secretary of Maritime Union of Aus- tralia Queensland Branch.

My campaign relied on a strong left-wing campaign platform, a 4 page campaign leaflet, a running partner of my running mate in Paul Petersen, and my long time reputation as a fighter for working peo- ple’s rights in my home state of Queensland.

I was also fortunate that my political opponents could not contain their de- sire for office and fielded three candidates against me. The Stalinists could not organise their forces against a single Trotskyist. Ironic don’t you think?

On Friday 26 June at the union’s branch committee I explained that for me, in my life, the single greatest political influence comes from the man I consider the most outstanding of the 20th Century: our revolutionary socialist back- ground” that he is proud of.

The article concluded by saying that Bob believes that “society should be based on human need not human greed”. • bobraustralia.com • www.facebook.com/bobraustralia

Bob Carnegie

Grounded in the working class
For Corbyn, and for different politics

The Left by Colin Foster

“It is the duty of the activists within the Labour Party and Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory to fight alongside the public sector workers”, wrote Jeremy Corbyn during the “Winter of Discontent”, the great wave of public sector workers’ strikes towards the end of the 1974-8 Labour government.

Corbyn is now the left candidate for leader of the Labour Party. Back in 1979 he was a young union official and a left-wing Labour councillor in Haringey, north London. He was writing in the first regular monthly issue of Socialist Organiser. The core people in the production and promotion of Socialist Organiser were the forerunners of today’s Solidarity and Workers’ Liberty.

We produced it with a broad coalition of Labour left-wingers and with much debate in its pages. Socialist Organiser was also a campaigning paper. Its broad coalition subscribed to much clearer and more radical ideas than the general “broad left” of the labour movement, which in those days was dominated by the Communist Party and its influence. It called for “working-class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working-class socialist system in its place... to make the decisive sectors of industry public property (remember, Labour Briefing). Some of his supporters may be offended by the criticisms of his politics which we will make in this article, but I would expect Corbyn supporters may be offended by the criticisms of his politics.

CONFRONTATION

The coalition around Socialist Organiser broke up in 1980 over choices for left-Labour councils (then numerous) facing Thatcher’s Tory government.

We argued for them to use the town halls as platforms to mobilise for confrontation. Others argued for them to “gain time” by increasing rates (local property taxes) to offset cuts in central government finance.

The core rate-raisers were another group within the Socialist Organiser coalition from a Trotskyist background, then called the Chartists and previously Revolutionary Communist League. The main document in which the Chartists laid out their basis for splitting, from Socialist Organiser was signed to their leading people and one other person, Jeremy Corbyn.

The Chartists went off to produce Labour Briefing (two rival journals of that name continue today). Corbyn was less factional about the split than the Chartists were, and remained within his journal. Jeremy Corbyn is surely a socialist. But in his articles for the Morning Star he rarely or never says that. He calls for a “popular movement against cuts”. He advocates “raising taxes for the very richest, collecting tax from corporations”. But not social ownership of industry. Not expropriating the banks. Not workers’ control.

When Corbyn wrote about Ed Miliband in the Morning Star, it was usually to praise something Miliband had just done, then to bemoan its limits. Even when asked to comment on Blair’s record, he started by saying there were two sides to it, and praising the “positive” side before bemoaning the “negative”.

Corbyn rarely uses the word “socialist”, but he has commented on Chavez’s Venezuela, Evo Morales’s Bolivia, and Castro’s Cuba as if they are, more or less, models of a future society.

This model of a future society is one to which workers in a country like Britain could never be won. Or, if they were won to it, it would be a grievous sidetread, similar to the winning of millions of French and Italian workers after World War Two to the USSR as a model of future society.

On some issues publicly (and possibly on many privately) Corbyn is better than the Morning Star. He supports Tibet’s national rights, he opposed Russia’s seizure of Crimea and “Russian militarism” in Ukraine. In the Independent (10 June 2013) he wrote: “There are strong arguments for staying in the EU”, while making reasonable criticisms of the EU as it exists. But on international politics, mostly, he limits himself to deploying military moves by the US and its allies and appeasing for peace. So, for example, he expresses “concern over human rights in Iran”. He notes the “appalling human rights record of the Syrian regime”. He opposed Hamas’ rocket attacks on Israel, and seems, though it is not clear, to support a two-states settlement in Israel/Palestine.

The result is as with the more-or-less pro-Stalinist left of the era between the 1960s and 1989-91. Repression in the Stalinist states? Reprehensible invasions? Bad. But they would shrug sadly at those things, rather than denouncing them loudly, because, they said, to denounce might help the “cold warriors”. Never “be anti-Soviet!”

In truth socialists needed to oppose US and British imperialism, and simultaneously denounce Stalinism with vigour, and condemn its failure, sad though which only a few authors, and credibly the leftists who took that line, and increased demoralisation after 1991. We should not copy the approach with Hamas in place of the US SSR.

MIGRANTS

Corbyn has spoken out for migrant rights. But his case is addled and warped by his repeated insistence that the only cause of migrant flows is “Western wars”.

People voting for Corbyn for Labour leader will be voting for “Western wars” - a workerful world, in the UK is the highest on record. We are moving further away from a workerless world, not closer to it. Why? Because if capital can cut costs and increase profits here, it will start new lines of enterprise there. Accumulation of capital, as Karl Marx put, means increasing the size of the productive forces. On the one hand, skills are thrown out of work and pauperised. Marx also railed against “the apologists [who] calls [the long-term trend for expansion of capital to bring expansion of the working class] a compensation for the misery, the sufferings, the possible death of the displaced labourers during the transition period that banishes them into the industrial reserve army!” We must and do fight the bosses on the terms and modes in which new technologies are introduced.

I disagree with John Cunningham (Solidarity 369) when he repeats Keynes’s or Rikfkin’s predictions. I agree with most of Bruce Robinson’s article in the same issue, but I disagree about capital’s apparent withdrawal from technology which automatically pilots of planes and cars.

Every technology marginalises some skills. The introduction of new technologies is repeated, the technology marginalises some skills. Printing marginalises the skills of illuminated manual script-copying.

I recently had a major medical operation. It was done by robot. Presumably that tends to marginalise the surgeons’ manual skills. But the robot also makes the operation safer, more reliable, easier to recover from. Some surgeons will still have manual skills, as some people are still skilled hunters or calligraphers. Others will develop new skills around the robots. That is fine. To want to exclude workers from the workplace is a retrenchment, not a step backwards.

The Left campaign can help win people to that spirit, but only if we carry that spirit into it, in debate with Corbyn supporters as well as with the right wing.

A workerful world

85 years ago, John Maynard Keynes wrote: “The increase of technical efficiency has been taking place faster than we can deal with the problem of labour absorption”, and predicted that that generation’s grandchildren (that is, the “baby boom” generation now in their late teens or early twenties) would be a day.

Twenty years ago Jeremy Rifkin published a book entitled “The End of Work”, and predicting “a near-workerless world”. That prediction failed to reach the heights of moral judgement inaccessible to those who are still skilled hunters or calligraphers. Others will develop new skills around the robots. That is fine. To want to exclude workers from the workplace is a retrenchment, not a step backwards.

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Martin Thomas, north London
How to fight Daesh

The killing of at least 39 people by a gunman in Sousse, Tunisia, along with the destruction of a Shia mosque in Kuwait, on Friday 26 June, may signal a shift in strategy for Daesh (ISIS).

Until now, their declared aim was the establishment of a caliphate in Iraq-Syria. This latest development could be the start of a new global jihad. The targeting of tourists is a move away from the targeting of religious minorities and non Sunni Muslims.

The flow of foreign fighters to Daesh’s capital in Raqqa, Syria, is another alarming trend. Tunisian nationals now make up the largest proportion of foreign fighters.

And Daesh will be the beneficiaries of intensifying sectarian division and conflict in area where Daesh has established itself in Iraq.

Online pictures and videos show Iraqi Shia militias, many funded by Iran, arming the brutality of Daesh. In one film a militant hang a man upside down and burns him alive. In another supposed Daesh supporters are shown being beheaded. And in yet another an alleged child supporter of the Sunni jihadists is shot.

Shia militias deny having units within Anbar province where much of the fighting between Daesh and Iraqi Government forces has taken place. But reports, including from Human Rights Watch, say that Shia groups harass Sunnis, anyone they suspect of supporting or even tolerating the presence of Daesh, long after Daesh have been driven out of the area.

COMPETITION

Both sides are now engaged in a vicious competition over which can commit the most terrifying atrocity, demonstrate the most brutality. Of course Daesh use Shia militia videos to recruit to their operation.

As well as continuing fighting with Kurdish forces, Daesh are attacking members of rival Islamist groups within Syria. Online videos show 12 men being beheaded, some of whom were from Jaysh al Islam and the al Nusra Front, who make up the largest jihadist opposition to Daesh within Syria.

In Yemen where al Qaeda claim their strongest base, Daesh attacked Shia al Houthis rebel leaders in the Yemeni capital. This strategy may be aimed at pushing out al Qaeda, who have used the rebellion by the al Houthis to consolidate power in the south-east of the country, but not resorted to heavy sectarian violence.

In an interview with the Guardian (10 June) al Qaeda ideologues, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada (recently released from jail) discussed the rift with Daesh which has led to it supplanting al Qaeda as the foremost jihadist network.

Maqdisi, who remains close to Ayman al-Zawahiri Al Qaeda’s leader, says Daesh are a seemingly loyal group when operating as Al Qaeda in Iraq, but the appointment of Abu Bakr al Bagdadi as their leader, following the death of founder al Zarqawi, displeased al Qaeda. Permission for al Bagdadi’s elevation was not sort from Bin Laden. A later falling out between al Bagdadi’s group and the Syrian al Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al Nusra caused the final split.

Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, Daesh’s spokesperson and one of their senior propagandists, has declared al Qaeda’s leaders are western stooges and “misleading scholars”.Maqdisi states that “Bin Laden was a star. He had special charisma” where as Zawahiri does not have the ability to be listened and obeyed, leaving him isolated and without the infrastructure of global affiliation that helped to sustain al Qaeda.

After 9/11 al Qaeda was able to gather groups across much of the Arab world as well as in Europe, Africa and South Asia, where it based itself on the Afghan/Pakistan border. Individual groups were given freedom to operate as it was believed that strategy would bring in supporters and promote the establishment of a Caliphate. The leadership would vet and select commanders to ensure they were loyal, but did not interfere in the day-to-day running of the separate organisations. Daesh’s universal declaration of a Caliphate with a chosen Caliph and the call for all devout Muslims to join it, and swear allegiance to it, has completely undercut al Qaeda’s methods.

Much of what Maqdisi and Qatada say shows a generational split between Daesh and its commanders and the older, more established figures in al Qaeda. Maqdisi says he wants a more “moderate” organisation, more like Hamas in Gaza then Daesh in Raqqa. Such a shift may prove popular with those appalled by Daesh brutality. But Hamas and Al Qaeda are not “acceptable” versions of Daesh; their ideology and outlook is very similar, it is only tactics which divide them.

Some of the roots of this seemingly unstoppable wave of reaction lie in what the USA did after invading Iraq in 2003. It disbanding much of the Iraqi state machine and promoted “de-Ba’athification”. In the chaos and destruction which followed everyday governance collapsed. Its slow replacement by a fragile political system which depended upon the representation of ethnic identities has, in the long-run, completely failed. Although sectarian conflict waned for a few years, forces around the mosques and the Islamist factions were able to come to the fore. And for some time now corrupt Shia sectarianism has been dominant in government.

All these factors have allowed Daesh to gain a base among disaffected Sunni Arabs of the northern and western areas of Arab Iraq. They have recruited former Ba’athist intelligence officers and military commanders and that has helped them establish an army of experienced and able soldiers and military commanders extremely quickly.

Haji Bakr, who is said to have been the architect of Daesh’s takeover of northern Syria brought an entire Ba’athist unit with him when he joined the group.

For Workers’ Liberty, the appalling events in Tunisia and the continuing expansion of Daesh’s influence across the region underline the need for step up solidarity. But what do we say politically?

We are against the British government’s shallow and potentially dangerously counter-productive propaganda initiatives in schools. The Tunisian events have triggered announcements about spying on schools students’ internet use, but the government have been planning this for some time. But young people in schools should be allowed a democratic space to debate issues about religion and racism, a space where Daesh’s distorted worldview can be challenged.

The campaign shows a dangerous lack of grip, but this is unfortunately not unusual. It is mirrored by the actions of the Tunisian government which after the attack on the Bardo museum in Tunis, cracked down on radical Islamist groups, and closed mosques. These measures absolutely fail to work, with the ideological hold that Salafism holds over sections of society to debate issues about religion and racism, a space where Daesh’s distorted worldview can be challenged.

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How the talks broke down

Up to Friday 26 June the Greek government of Syriza-ANEL was very close to reaching an agreement with the eurozone leaders. It looked set to abandon its last “red lines” and accept 90-95% of the conditions for a new bailout, including direct wage and pension reductions and explicitly maintaining the framework of the last five years of Memorandum.

The Greek government had accepted the logic that increased tax revenues would be based on VAT increases and the preservation of the regressive property tax; the principle of zero deficit for the financing of the pension system; the gradual withdrawal of the Pensioners’ Social Solidarity Benefit (EKAS), and the extension of the retirement age to 67.

In the end no deal was reached. On Saturday 27th, after a long cabinet meeting Alexis Tsipras announced a referendum. The eurozone leaders would not even cede enough to make a “honourable compromise” for the Syriza parliamentary group and Syriza’s rank and file and electoral base. The only talk of debt restructuring the eurozone leaders would accept was a vague reference to a debate on the Greek debt in the future based upon a framework sketched with Venizelos and Samaras back in 2012.

The drama of the negotiation for the last five months has been largely the refutation of the Syriza leaders’ central illusions, of a return to progressive development achieved through rational negotiations and by exploiting the “internal contradictions” within the creditors’ camp. The government’s negotiating team had the illusion that the eurozone leaders were sure eventually to back down, even at the eleventh hour, and concede a poor but nonetheless manageable political agreement, because they feared the economic cost of a rupture and because of their internal contradictions.

PUNISH

The eurozone ministers, accustomed to the servility of Papandreou, Samaras and Venizelos, thought that Alexis Tsipras was a puppy that barked but would not bite.

In the end, under the threat of a bank run, they were sure that Tsipras would sign an agreement that would dissolve his government and his party, and initiate the conversion of a mutilated Syriza into a neoliberal social democratic party with that as its government coalition.

Alexis Tsipras and the Greek delegation were treated in Brussels as troublemakers who needed exemplary punishment. As journalist Stavros Lygeros put it: “they are not satisfied with chopping his head off. They would like to parade his head as an example to everyone else”.

On Monday night 29th, Alexis Tsipras invited the Greek people to vote “no” in the referendum on Sunday 5 July. Then on Tuesday 30th he made another U-turn. He wrote a new letter to the eurozone leaders asking for a €30 billion euro loan from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to pay the lenders up to 2017; virtually accepting the eurozone ministers’ proposal of 28 June; but also calling for debt restructuring.

The eurozone leaders rejected his new approach, but it adds confusion to the referendum. Doesn’t the leadership of Syriza understand that this is a contradiction? “No” in the referendum and yet “yes” to a new memorandum with slight modifications?

The leaders of the government and of Syriza — in the first place, the right wing of Draganas, Papadimoulis, Stathakis and Co., but helped by tolerance from the Left Platform leaders, regardless of their intentions, have in practice contributed to undermining the “no” mobilisation and shaping conditions for a possible “yes” victory.

Greek left mobilises for “no” on 5 July

By Dora Polenta

On Saturday morning 27 June the Greek people woke up to find that the call from Alexis Tsipras and his government for a no vote against the persistent blackmailing of the creditors, the “partners”, the “institutions”, or whatever else we call them, has finally got us (albeit in an unprepared way, somewhat sideways) out of the black hole and deadlock of the “compromise” made by the Syriza government with the eurozone finance ministers on 20 February.

Since then we have seen harsh class struggle and conflict, with the national and international ruling class exhibiting coordination and “solidarity” in order to protect their vested interests. The ruling classes and the oligarchies, both internationally and in Greece, are trying to impose the power of fear as the only permissible ideology.

Since 27 June, there has been a high level of political activity from both camps. The united front of New Democracy, Pasok, and Potami in Greece, work alongside the international financial oligarchy represented by the likes of Christine Lagarde, Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, Mario Draghi and Wolfgang Schäuble. The mainstream media try to create a climate of panic, with continuous reporting and live interviews from the queues outside the ATMs. It reached a crescendo with a Sky journalist publicly announcing he had cancelled a holiday in Corfu because of the “unstable and chaotic situation”.

Some bosses have announce the suspension of work, or reduced production. Others have threatened lock outs and mandatory unpaid leave for their workers. Yet others say that their companies will not open if next Monday if the “no” vote prevails on 5 July, and some openly threaten their workers with redundancy if they do not vote “yes”. Many companies have announced that they will not be paying the wages of their workers until further notice.

POWER

The trouble is that for five months the government has left untouched the power of the industrialists, the contractors, the bankers, the media barons, the pharmaceutical manufacturers and the ship owners.

Intimidation and terror by the capitalist bosses will escalate as the referendum approaches. The revolutionary left in and outside Syriza, workers, trade unions and community and social organisations, should immediately expose and fight back against the capitalist bosses’ terrorism.

The trade union confederation GSEE (for private sector workers), with its leadership controlled by the trade-union fractions of Pasok and New Democracy, has had the audacity to demand that the government withdraw the referendum and declared support for a “yes” vote.

There are sizeable demonstrations and rallies in support of the “no” camp in virtually every city of Greece, with support from all major trade unions, with the sad exception of GSEE, and community movements, anti-fascists committees and solidarity networks. The “yes” counter-demonstrations have mobilised the cream of the reactionary intelligentsia of the country, minor celebrities, and some lower middle class people.

The official Syriza guidelines for Syriza’s activity in the “no” campaign says it will emphasize the need for national unity whatever the outcome of the referendum. It will campaign on three points.

1. The social character of “no” in the referendum, highlighting the impact of the memorandum and supported the need to overthrow austerity policies. The “no” vote, say the Syriza leaders, will be a negotiating tool in the hands of the government to continue negotiations from 6 July freshly em-powered by a re-affirmed popular mandate.

2. To highlighted the right for the Greek people to be left undisturbed to vote without foreign interference. The slogan is “no, for dignity and democracy.”

3. Emphasis on Syriza being a European party that seeks equitable participation of the country in the EU and that is trying to build a new Europe.

Syriza’s rank and file have been back on the streets again, and given the “no” vote a meaning beyond the government’s intentions — a bold “no” to all memorandum and a bold demand on the government to adhere, “unilaterally” and against the “institutions”, to the Thessaloniki declaration on which it was elected.

“How this is a class vote”

By Thanassis Kourkoulas, DEA Central Committee

The attitude of the vast majority of workers is to say “no” to memorandum policies.

At the same time many people are confused in the face of the terror propaganda of the pro-system bloc. The outcome will be 50-50. Everybody in workers’ unions and the left is doing our best to get a clear vote for no.

DEA is in the front line of the “no” campaign. We are for a clear “no” to the memorandum policies, including a new memorandum agreement which is possible from Monday, whatever the result of the vote on Sunday.

The main issue now is to get the victory of the “no” vote, so that the government is not overthrown.

The government will definitely be overthrown from the right in the event of a “yes” vote. The system has gathered all its forces together with the memorandum parties, famous actors, neoliberal economists etc. etc. The campaign is bolstered by the union of Greek factory owners.

This is not the issue of national sovereignty being undermined. Only Golden Dawn says this. It is clear that the no campaign has a very clear class basis. For the majority of supporters of the no vote, this is a class issue, not a national issue.

This is about salaries, pensions in Greece and all around Europe. This is also clear for the Syriza majority.
A “no” vote demands radical policies

By Dora Polenta

The eurozone leaders warn that they will take a “no” vote as a mandate to expel Greece from the eurozone.

Inside the eurozone, there at least appeared to be possibilities for piecemeal relief via a serious easing-off by the eurozone leaders and the European Central Bank. That was entirely possible in economic terms, and refused by them only because they want to warn workers everywhere else in Europe that resistance as in Greece cannot bring results.

If Greece is forced out of the eurozone, the tempo changes. Only thorough and radical measures by the government can limit disruption and chaos and enable reconstruction.

The revolutionary left must demand that the government implement these measures:

- Immediate nationalisation of banks. Protect the deposits of small and medium savers with transparency and methods of social control. Running of the banks by elected and revocable administrations, involving representatives of government, of bank workers, and of the organisations of the working class.
- As Lenin wrote (“The Impending Catastrophe”, September 1917): “To talk about ‘regulating economic life’ and yet evade the question of the nationalisation of the banks means the ‘common people’ by florid words and grandiloquent promises with the deliberate intention of not fulfilling these promises. It is absurd to control and regulate deliveries of grain, or the production and distribution of goods generally, without controlling and regulating bank operations.
- The current connection of banks with the (“illegal and onerous”) government debt demands the unilateral stopping of their status as hostages to the capitalist oligarchy. They should be expropriated immediately and all private media and frequencies and equipment should be passed over in citizens’ associations for free and equitable use based on the principle of truly pluralistic media.

These radical measures in order to have a viable prospect, should be part of an overall programmatic plan socialist transformation of society.

KKE abstains in the battle

The revolutionary left in and outside Syriza has campaigned for a “no” in the referendum right from the start.

Whatever the intentions of the government, the referendum objectively creates conditions of rupture with the EU/ECB/IMF Troika and provides a historic opportunity for the working class and youth to enter the political stage.

But the Greek Communist Party (KKE) voted in parliament against the government’s proposal to proceed to the referendum and is asking its members and supporters to spoil their ballot papers. They call this “a working-class triple no” against the memorandum of the creditors against the memorandum of the government and against the EU and Eurozone.

KKE has again abstained from the class struggle as it is expressed through the internal contradictions of the capitalist system. Of course the referendum is a restricted democratic process, far short of workers power and control and extensive workers’ daily democracy. However, is an arena that the workers’ vanguard and the revolutionary left must engage with, in the same way that trade unions engage with the arena of working-class exploitation and the reproduction of the capitalist system. KKE is disengaging from the current struggle of the working class and transferring all hopes to Saint Long Distance Socialism.

It indicates KKE’s fear of defeat and victory at the same time, its inverted tailism (opposition to the Syriza government’s tactics and political moves at all costs), and its lack of consistent and principled working class analysis of the concrete situation and concrete duties. The duty of the Revolutionary left is to form a United Front and align all its forces for the victory of a “thunderous” and revolutionary “no”.

If this battle is not won and the “no” vote does not prevail, then that will bring a very serious defeat for working people, with significant effects on morale and fighting spirit.

It will open the way for new harsh austerity Memoranda and be the nail in the coffin of the project of a government of the left.
How the left became “Little Englanders”

In a 1975 referendum on UK’s membership of the European Economic Community (Common Market), forerunner of the European Union, most of the left argued for UK withdrawal. That was the culmination of a step-by-step opportunist collapse into left-nationalism since the 1960s, when all the would-be Trotskyist groups said the answer to limited capitalism integration was European workers’ unity, not national withdrawal. This article, taken from Permanent Revolution No. 3, describes the evolution.

“We must never play with slogans that are not revolutionary by their very nature, even by their very essence, even when they are revolutionary according to the political conjuncture, the relationship of forces, etc...” Leon Trotsky: ‘Theses on Unity and the Youth’, Writings 1934-5.

“The will of the ‘nation’ or of its majority; is not a sort of God for Social Democracy before which it humbly prostrates itself; on the contrary, Social Democracy’s whole historic mission depends above all on revolutionising, on forming, the will of the ‘nation’ — that is, its working majority”. Rosa Luxemburg, 1908. Quoted in J P Nettl’s biography

“The method of ideological imitation of the opponent and of the class enemy — a method which is throughput contradictory to the theory and the psychology of Bolshevikism — flows quite organically from the essence of centrism, from its unprincipledness, inconsistency, ideological hollowness (in the Comintern we see one and the same spirit of mimicy, constant imitation of the opponent, a striving not to use their own weapons — which, alas they do not possess — but weapons stolen from the arsenal of the enemy”. (Leon Trotsky: “Against National Communism” August 1931. From The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany.)

The orgy of anti-marcheering to which the “revolutionary left”, following the so-called Communist Party and the Labour Party reformists, abandoned itself in the run-up to the referendum was all the more shameless and unbalanced because the leaders of the organisations conducting it did not actually believe most of what they said.

They believed only that it was necessary at whatever cost to get into step with the trade union bureaucracy and the reformists/state-capitalist “left” in the Labour Party, and with the tank and file working class militants who follow their lead. What they said about the Common Market was dictated by that goal and by those considerations — not by a principle of movement on the basis of its merits and in the light of the real interests of the working class.

Almost the entire “revolutionary left” abandoned the high ground of communist principle and waded into the swamp of charismatism.

The charge is irreparable in the light of this fact: with the partial exception of the Workers’ Revolutionary Party, whose identity is not to be taken seriously, those on the revolution ary left who campaigned against the Common Market had originally the self-same “abstentionist” position that Workers’ Fight [forerunner of AWL] maintained throughout the campaign, and they abandoned it, one after the other, when, and only when, the anti-Market campaign had gained such force as to be a threat to their credibility with militants on the broad left. Previously, when the revolutionary organisations allowed themselves to make an independent assessment of the issue on its merits all of them arrived at politics the very opposite of those they advocated in the referendum campaign.

The International Socialism group [forerunner of the SWP], “In or out of the Common Market, the problems facing the British labour movement are likely to be very much the same. Indeed the point is that the issues facing us are more similar to those facing European and American workers than at any time in the past 40 years” (John Palmer, IS journal no. 12, Spring 1963). It was to maintain that position until late in 1974.

The International Marxist Group. In the early 60s, the IMG was a tiny splinter from the then British Section of the [mainstream orthodox Trotskyist] International groupings USLF. So let us quote for the present IMG, the opinion at that time of Ernest Mandel, their most authoritative spokesman. Writing

Abstain or vote “yes”?

By Martin Thomas

How does advocacy of a vote against British withdrawal from the EU in the coming referendum reconcile with our line of “bosses’ Europe, bosses’ Britain, no choice” in the early 1970s, and our argument around 2002 for abstention if a referendum on euro entry were held then?

We have always regarded even a limited voluntary integration of states, even on a bourgeois basis, as better than the walling-off of nations. Even in the 1970s, we used to de liberately spook lefties by telling them that Edward Heath was to the left of Tony Benn on the issue.

In 1972-3 we did not positively support British entry into the EU (EEC) because we did not want to endorse the conditions of integration, including integration into the Common Agricultural Policy, which increased food prices.

We did have some comrades in our group who were in favour of voting “yes” to joining the euro. We are in favour of adopting a single currency which would include a common currency, but the euro (complete with unelected European Central Bank, Maastricht criteria, and the rest) was a bad way of doing it.

In the 1975 referendum we just cut-and-pasted our stance from 1972-3. There’s a reasonable case that we were wrong about that. Once Britain was in the EU, we should certainly still have campaigned for drastic changes in the EU, but against withdrawal.

There were differences in 1975. Britain’s social provision and labour regulations were then in many areas better, not worse, than the EU average. No-one proposed exit from the EU as a way to stop immigration from the other EU countries (only eight of them at the time). The referendum appeared as a vote between “left” and “right”, where the left argued for withdrawal to protect Britain’s somewhat-better social conditions, and the right for integration in order to harness international market forces. It was reasonable to take account of that in our detailed tactics. But today, voting against British withdrawal from the EU implies no endorsement of any of the EU’s membership conditions or regulations: it means only that we want to see things by going forward from the current limited, bureaucratic, capitalist integration rather by going backwards to walled-off nation-states. Would we have voted for the Act of Union 1707? No. But the Scottish referendum implied no endorsement of the status quo. Voting “No” means voting for better “starting conditions” from within the EU. Powerful events are converging which could give dramatic changes to the British left, and we would have given no support to calls for restoring the old petty principalities.

* Abridged. Full article available online in PDF format bit.ly/1UCnK4X

FEATURE
to be desired, and in future things would be different. They were Tariq Ali and John Ross.

And truly the zeal of the IMG, this most internationalist of all international organisations in Britain, for the anti-EEC cause, does it not make one want to be revolutionary instead of a conformist convert. Massive world-wide scenarios were drawn in which the major strategies of this small organisation dealt with the defence of the ‘anti-imperialist’ Left. Liberals merge in with anything in world politics, the balance of armies and the inter-imperialist alliances — everything, that is, except that which should be central to revolutionaries — the class consciousness of this country’s working class. The IMG here is the Labour Party and to the question — if it is so important for Britain to be out of the Common Market and if in campaigning against it the IMG is behaving as a responsible organisation acting on an international programme then it now faces the ruthless International sections of the USFI, within the Common Market, doing likewise — there is no answer. Or rather only one that reveals that crassly opportunist chameleon politics of the weather-cock “Trotskyism” which the IMG represents!

From the proletarian point of view to get drawn into calculations regarding world power relationships and for the van-guard to surrender its principles and independence to qualify to join in the ballyhoo is a total defeat — especially where re-actionary ruling class ideas find their most forceful expression, after the ruling class itself has abandoned them, in their old guard, wriggling as it likes and matter prayerful gibberish about the Socialist United States of Europe as it will, the argument that the EEC is worse. Accepting the conclusion it implicitly accepts the premise. Trotsky long ago dealt with this sort of accommodation to nationalists (the Nazis). What he said about defeated and humiliated Germany, bound by the Versailles Treaty applies with a hundred times as much force today to Britain. To join in the ballyhoo is a total defeat — especially where re-actionary ruling class ideas find their most forceful expression, after the ruling class itself has abandoned them, in their old guard, wriggling as it likes and matter prayerful gibberish about the Socialist United States of Europe as it will, the argument that the EEC is worse. Accepting the conclusion it implicitly accepts the premise. Trotsky long ago dealt with this sort of accommodation to nationalists (the Nazis). What he said about defeated and humiliated Germany, bound by the Versailles Treaty applies with a hundred times as much force today to Britain.

... At the most important place in his conclusion, Thaelmann put the idea that Germany is today a ball in the hands of the entente. It is in consequence primarily a matter of national self-defense or rearmament, but even France and Italy also, and even England are ‘balls’ in the hands of the United States. The dependence of Europe upon America... has a deeper significance. It is the result of the refusal of the German people to submit to the rule of this foreign agent, the American imperialism, over the Entente. This is why — by the way — the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe, and not the single bare slogan, ‘Down with the Versailles peace’, is the proletarian answer to the ‘constructions of the European continent’.

“...All these questions nevertheless occupy second place. Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a ‘ball’ in the hands of the entente, but primarily by the fact that the German proletariat which is split up, powerless, and oppressed, is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. The main enemy is at home’, Karl Liebknecht taught at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends? Or perhaps his teaching is no longer any good?”

“Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a ‘ball’ in the hands of the entente, but primarily by the fact that the German proletariat which is split up, powerless, and oppressed, is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. The main enemy is at home’, Karl Liebknecht taught at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends? Or perhaps his teaching is no longer any good?”

The main enemy is at home. But the revolutionary left finds it permissible to struggle up to the official labour movement in a chauvinist binge, even if it means snuggling up to that enemy.

To the reformists it is logical to defend British “parliamen-
tary democracy”. Their socialism is a bastard stew composed of parliamentary reform (on the basis historically of Britain’s traditional privileges vis-a-vis the colonies), elitist, Fabian-type nationalisation and municipalisation from above, with massive slabs of Stalinist coloration. It is not at all incompatible with nationalism — on the contrary, for these “socialists” of a privileged metropolis, England is a little world all on its own. A vulgar reformism influenced by Marxist ideas, with a typically organic evolutionist approach, would logically favour the Common Market, not oppose it, as Britain’s actual party of the working class, the reformist Tribune left, does. It is fitting that the threads of a future world state nearer, for eliminating the conditions that have bred two world wars, European civil

Continued on page 10
perhaps, that once inside the “No” campaign they could be lured by a propaganda for the Socialist United States of Europe. But its logical starting point is “In or out the fight goes on: neither little Britain, nor EFTA, nor the EEC, but the Socialist United States of Europe.”

The controversies between Lenin and Trotsky on the slogan of United States of Europe rested on Lenin’s fear of rapid abstraction and grand ideals being counterposed to concrete tasks and a realistic assessment of the real situation and possibilities. He feared a responsible attitude towards tasks in a given country could be evaded by appeals to a greater, wider, more international task.

He knew that retreating up the ladder of virtuous generalities and abstractions could be as easily the route to an opportunist holthole as the supine prostration of right opportunism. He saw revolutionary phrasemongering and right opportunism as complementary twins. The use of the revolutionary left tainted with chauvinism, has put the “Socialist United States of Europe” indicate that Lenin’s fears are not a matter of the distant past.

If the decree of actual accommodation to chauvinism on the common market issue is translated back to World War Two, then the Trotskyists would have been deserters. But even when the “national question” means the imperialist powers united in a regime which would have smashed the labour movement, the Trotskyists stood against patriotism. They didn’t focus on “No to Hitler”, the common working class feeling exploited by the ruling class, but on “No to British capitalism”. The main thing is still at home. The ideas of that enemy, even his partner discarded ones, still have a powerful hold on the working class.

The defeat of the anti-Common Market forces in the referendum was not defeat for the left, though it was a deserved slap in the face for the pseudo-left, including the revolutionary left. There was no real left in the campaign, then, though there was a real left in the camp. The result was, it must be said, according to the terms posed in the debate, a defeat for retrograde chauvinism, though the fact of the working class getting drawn into the debate at all was a defeat for it and a victory for the ruling class.

In the history of British labour, the period before entry will be depicted as one in which the issue deflected attention from the Industrial Relations Bill, and the recent campaign to get Britain out as one which gave an escape hatch to the retreating Labour leader Jack Jones and Co vis-a-vis the Labour government — while both were busy foisting the Social Contract on the working class.

The terrible exhibition of capitulation to chauvinism by a left faced with racism and the Irish problem as life and death issues is possible because of a main chase after the elusive “national question”, the defluxury snare of the notion that little groups can get rich quick by ideological collaboration. It is a refusal to understand the fundamental basis of communist activity: internationalist propaganda, the necessary functioning of a propaganda group, often against the stream and facing isolation. It is above all to misunderstand the fundamental rule of revolutionaries in the working class and the necessary bedrock of revolutionary party building — the ideological struggle.

Little short of collapse into chauvinism in an imperialist war could add up to a worse picture of the “revolutionary” left than that presented — over four or five years without sover- eing up — on the Common Market question. Their entire wis dom was summed up in the idea that abstention is not a good revolutionary party building — the ideological struggle.

Win or lose, we should fight to preserve these networks and argue that the campaign should be used to forge enduring links between the activists and Trotsky’s British Trotskyists. Labour Party members and wider activists around a perspective of building a workers’ party. It is a job to develop that insight and convince people of the need to transform our whole labour movement.

Yes, but the main reason that the unions are so timid is because they are tied to the Labour leadership. They should break from Labour and form a new left party.

If only it was the case that the unions were pushing militant struggles and radical politics, only to be held back by the Labour Party! You’ve got things upside down.

One of the major reasons why Labour ran such a flat and uninspiring platform in 2015 was that the unions, most of which have policies far to the left of the Labour’s, did not as sert themselves through the party. At the National Policy Forum in 2014, Unite had the chance to vote for an anti-austerity alternative budget proposal and decided to back Ed Balls’s cuts instead!

The problem is that the unions’ leaderships and political structures are not held accountable to members. All too often, the unions think if they box clever, and avoid a public fight, they can gain some concessions from the Labour Party.

This chasm between the bureaucratic leadership of the Labour Party and the union bureaucracy would be a problem even if the unions disaffiliated from Labour and backed a more radical party. All the same problems, flowing from the democratic deficit in our unions, would be replicated no matter what the political set-up.

We need to build rank-and-file networks to assert mem bers’ control over what our unions’ political representatives are doing in the Labour Party. To make sure they push union policy and to replace them when they don’t.

I support Jeremy Corbyn but if he doesn’t win the left should accept it’s been the final push and should leave Labour. Afterwards, I’m going to join the Greens, or maybe Left Unity.

But the Corbyn campaign isn’t about Jeremy Corbyn as an individual candidate! It is about having an opportunity to transform the movement organisational and politically. If the Labour Party will not govern it would not overnight solve the problems of the Labour movement. The Labour movement needs to be run by and for the working class.

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RMT AGM pledges to fight attacks

By Janine Booth, delegate from Central Line East branch

The Annual General Meeting of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union voted to back Jeremy Corbyn’s bid for Labour leader, fight the Tories’ attacks on trade union rights, and step up its work on equalities.

As well as committing to militant industrial struggles, delegates also voted unanimously for several emergency resolutions from branches opposing the tightening of anti-union laws promised in the Queen’s Speech. These included support for a national demonstration and rank-and-file conference this year.

Delegates voted unanimously for the union to defend migrant workers from increasing hostility and government attacks. The resolution — submitted by Central Line East branch — stressed the common interests of British-born and migrant workers and committed the union to circulating facts in the face of disinformation about migration, and to aim the union’s fire at employers not workers or other nationalities.

However, the AGM also reaffirmed RMT’s intention to campaign for the UK to leave the European Union. Around one-sixth of delegates opposed this, following speeches which highlighted that the referendum will see a ‘frenzy of anti-migrant prejudice’ and that a UK exit would strengthen the right wing and lead to more attacks on workers.

The AGM adopted the Executive’s report on the General Election, meaning motions in support of TUSC, and proposing re-affiliating to the Labour Party, were not discussed.

The Executive report assessed the impact of RMT’s approach to the General Election, which had been to back candidates who were members of its Parliamentary group (over 20 Labour MPs plus the Greens’ Caroline Lucas) and consider requests from branches to back other candidates. While praising its candidates and the stance they took, the report promised to review the situation with TUSC, highlighting its low vote and instances where it had stood or supported candidates against RMT-backed candidates. It also confirmed that RMT would not seek realignment to Labour.

The AGM passed several broadly-progressive changes to the union’s structure, including making the whole National Executive full-time, creating a Cleaners’ Industrial Organising Conference, and allowing branches to submit resolutions directly to the National Executive. It also voted by a large majority to create a Disabled Members’ Committee and Conference, overturning the Executive’s decision not to do so. The rule change needed to achieve this will be submitted next year.

On international issues, the AGM supported the ‘anti-fascist resistance’ in Ukraine, after the arguments of delegates who said the motion failed to oppose Russian aggression and falsely painting the Kiev government as “fascist”.

A fundraiser fringe event for Rainbow International LGBT Activist Solidarity Fund, hosted by National President Peter Pinkney, and including a speech from Newcastle Rainbow supporter Ed Whitby and performances from delegates, raised £100.

Other industrial news

National gallery dispute continues — bit.ly/1LFLeX6

Stikes at Bradford college — bit.ly/1fsJbUK

Tube strikes set for 8-9 July

By Ollie Moore

Members of all four Tube unions will strike on 8-9 July, in disputes over pay, the implementation of 24-hour running (“Night Tube”), and job cuts.

Drivers’ union ASLEF returned a 98% majority for strikes, on a turnout of over 80%. Members of RMT, the largest union on the Tube, voted by over 90% for strikes in two ballots (one of all grades, over pay and Night Tube, and one of station workers over job cuts), on turnouts of around 53%. TSSA and Unite members also voted for strikes by over 70%.

Action will begin on the evening of 8 July, and conclude on the evening of the 9th. Combined strike action by all four unions is almost unprecedented, and could bring the Tube to an almost complete standstill.

The rank-and-file socialist bulletin Tubeorker, published by Workers’ Liberty, said: “Unions also need to steel themselves for management to try every trick in the book over the week ahead to stop the strike. There’ll be talk (rightly), and no doubt deals will be offered. The company will probably try to exploit potential divisions between grades by offering a better deal for drivers, hoping that ASLEF will settle and peel away. Activists in ASLEF must pressure their officers to make sure this doesn’t happen. We can only win it if we remain united.

“We don’t want to strike for the sake of it; we’re striking to win our demands. So if management back down between now and next Wednesday [8 July], and promise a collectively-negotiated agreement on Night Tube that protects our health and work/life balance; a decent pay deal that reflects increases in the cost of living; and a moratorium on the imposition of job cuts and a new ‘framework Agreement’ for station staff... then there’s no need for the strike to take place.”

“...But we all know that’s unlikely. We all know it will take tens of labour, almost certainly more strikes after this, to push management back.”

CalMac ferry strike over transfer threat

By Dale Street

RMT members employed by Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) staged three days of industrial action, including a one-day strike, in the last week of June.

A ballot in May saw a 92% vote for strikes, and a 98% vote to accept a 4% action short of a strike, on a 60% turnout.

The dispute centres on the threat to jobs, pensions and working conditions resulting from the fact that the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services, currently provided by CalMac, have been put out to tender.

As well as CalMac, the international business-outourcing company Serco is also bidding for the eight-boat tender for the Northern Isles ferry services and the £1 billion a year funding that goes with it.

In 2012, Serco beat CalMac to win the contract for the Northern Isles ferry services – and then promptly attacked staffing levels and the pensions and terms and conditions of employment of the CalMac employees who were transferred into Serco.

Serco also recently took over the Caledonian Sleeper rail service from Scotland to London in another tendering process run by the SNP Scottish government (which also saw Scottish domestic rail services handed over to Arriva).

The RMT is demanding guarantees that, whoever wins the Clyde and Hebrides contract, there will be no compulsory redundancies, and pensions and terms and conditions of employment will be preserved.

SNP and Labour fail homelessness caseworkers

By Anne Field

Glasgow City Council Homelessness Caseworkers are now in the fifteenth week of their all-out strike for pay regrading.

The length of the dispute has not dampened the strikers’ morale. Support for the strike remains strong in the broader trade union movement, and not just in Glasgow but throughout the country.

But Labour Group Leader Gordon Matheson has refused to budge. His position is that the strike is nothing to do with him but something to be sorted out between Lindsay and Social Work management. The strike involves “just” 70 core grades whose conditions and cuts to be implemented in consultation with staff and unions, and a search for (unexpected) ways to save money.

Matheson’s position has triggered a revolt within the Labour Group, spearheaded by councillors representing wards in the Shettleston constituency.

According to Frank McAveety: “The majority of the Group think it would be better if Gordon’s transition (i.e. removal as leader) is sooner rather than later.”

Constituency Labour Parties which have not yet adjourned for the summer should demand regrading of the homelesness caseworkers, Matheson’s resignation as Group Leader, and no support for Matheson’s deputy leadership bid.
By Ann Coleman, Alan Maass, and Nicole Colson

The U.S. Supreme Court’s 5-4 ruling on same-sex marriage (26 June) was a victory in the decades-long struggle to recognize the humanity and dignity of LGBT people.

There were large celebrations in cities across the U.S., with “Pride” parades and rallies in many cities taking on a new significance and joyful atmosphere.

In New York City, thousands of people waving “Love rules” signs and carrying rainbow flags, gathered on the streets outside of the Stonewall Inn. “To see this just means so much,” Stonewall Inn owner Stacy Lenz told one reporter. “It’s not just about the idea of marriage. It’s about equality.”

“I can go on with my life,” an elated Joe Vitale told CBS New York. “It was just so amazing.”

The mainstream media will highlight the legal strategy that led to victory, which dates back to the 2003 court ruling in Massachusetts that overturned a state ban on same-sex marriage. But those of us who were organising and protesting every step of the way need to remember that it was pressure at the grassroots that got us to this point.

Just a decade ago, the right wing had the momentum on the issue of marriage equality.

In the 2004 election campaign, Republicans made same-sex marriage a “wedge issue” to mobilize conservative voters, putting forward arguments for state constitutions to define marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. Voters in 11 states — Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah — all approved the bans on same-sex marriage by double-digit margins.

**CAUTIONED**

Mainstream LGBT rights advocates cautioned against any further efforts to push for equality, believing that this would only fuel the Republican-driven backlash.

Most Democratic political figures followed the likes of Bill Clinton and then-recently-elected Sen. Hillary Clinton in reinstating their commitment to marriage being between a man and woman.

But the Republican backlash was itself going in the opposite direction of public opinion. That became clear in the aftermath of another defeat for marriage equality — the passage of California’s anti-gay marriage Proposition 8 in November 2008.

This time, the response was different: On the night of the election itself, there were sizeable and angry demonstrations in San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities. Within days, the protests spread across the state, then to cities in other states, and finally across the country.

A new movement was born, one very different in character to the mainstream LGBT organizations that remained cautious about same-sex marriage. In city after city, the issue got people new to politics involved in organizing for the first time.

Less than a year after Prop 8 won in California, there was a national mobilization of 200,000 people to Washington, D.C., for the National Equality March, which put pressure on the same-sex marriage front and centre, but also raised a range of other questions, from the issue of “don’t-ask-don’t-tell” ban on gays and lesbians to the inclusion of trans people in the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and more.

**TIDE**

The tide was turning.

When, five years later, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider challenges to lower-court rulings upholding marriage equality, the total number of states with equal marriage rights became a majority. One year after that, three-quarters of the 50 states recognized same-sex marriage.

In 1996 polls 68 percent of people opposed marriage equality and only 27 percent supported it. By 2004 support had grown to 42 percent. The poll hit the 50 percent mark in 2011 and remained above that number since 2012, reaching 60 percent this spring.

Unsurprisingly, the right wing was apoplectic about the ruling.

Chief Justice John Roberts recycled the myth that “people around the world have viewed marriage” in a particular way for thousands of years and took the point a step further, calling the present generation “pretentious” for attempting “to burst the bonds of that history and tradition.”

Probably the most absurd as a social institution and dismissing the celebrations as being about a ruling that will mainly affect “rich, white” gays and lesbians.

This attitude neglects the very real impact that a legal victory for marriage equality will have on the lives of LGBT people like Jim Obergefell or Joe Vitale — people new to politics involved in organizing for the first time — one that actively involved hundreds of thousands of people over decades and that will continue to fight for the humanity and dignity of all LGBT people. The struggle that came together around marriage equality won’t stop there — it has lessons for all the fights taking place in every corner of an unjust and unequal society.

Besides opening the door for LGBT couples on issues around citizenship, child custody, health care access to retirement benefits, and more, the Supreme Court decision on marriage equality is a reminder of that most important political lesson: when we fight we can win.

Ours is a movement for humanity and dignity, and it will triumph in the end, no matter how the judges interpret the constitution.

* thanks to www.socialistworker.org

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On Saturday 27 June, Workers’ Liberty members joined the NCACF and LGSM on the trade union section of Pride. We shouted slogans including “Say it loud, say it queer, immigrants are welcome here!”

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