



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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NHS CASH SQUEEZE



The NHS is demonstrably very strapped for cash, as a long list of the biggest hospital Trusts in the country are revealing the largest overspends in the history of the NHS.

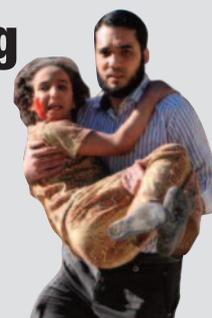
In order for the NHS to provide the care we need, we need more funding coming from central government to employ more permanent staff, improve pay and conditions, improve resources. For a fully-funded NHS we need to tax the rich!

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TAX THE RICH TO FILL CASH GAP SUPPORT JUNIOR DOCTORS AND STUDENT NURSES

Inside:

Syria: Russian bombing causes more to flee



Russian bombing in Aleppo causes many tens of thousands to flee.

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The left gears up for Europe referendum



Solidarity surveys how campaigns are lining up for the Europe referendum.

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Can councils set no-cuts budgets?



Sacha Ismail sets out the possibilities for fighting local government cuts.

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Join Labour!

Momentum sets out structure and plans for activity

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Turkey's hidden civil war against the Kurds

By Ralph Peters

Across areas in south-eastern Turkey, areas that are overwhelmingly ethnically Kurdish, a virtual civil war is going on.

The right wing Turkish AKP government's response has been what they describe as "security operations". These were first launched in the Sur district of Diyarbakir and the Cizre and Silopi districts of Şırnak in mid-December.

The alleged target of this offensive is the Kurdish PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), which had an on-off ceasefire with the Turkish government in the last few years, whilst Kurds increasingly turned to legal political campaigning through their party, the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party). The ceasefire was eventually called off in November after numerous assassinations and killings of Kurdish politicians and civilians.

According to the HDP, at least 200 Kurdish civilians, including 70 children, have been killed since July 2015. The Turkish government claims to have killed 500 "militants". On 6 February, 60 were killed in Cizre; the town has been under curfew for nearly two months since armed Kurdish militants, mostly affiliated with the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) — often referred to as the "youth wing" of the PKK — declared autonomy and began erecting roadblocks and digging trenches.

On Monday 8 February the Turkish regime announced that the repression should be expected in the Idil district of Şırnak, Nusaybin district of Mardin and Yüksekova district of Hakkari.

The US and all western governments have been silent about these atrocities and have continued to support Turkish president Recep

Tayyip Erdogan.

On behalf of the EU and European governments German Chancellor Angela Merkel made a deal with Erdogan, giving him €3 billion to stop Syrian migrants leaving Turkey for the EU. This helped Erdogan's credibility just before the Turkish general elections in November 2015. Nevertheless very recently Erdogan closed Turkey's borders to Syrian refugees, causing a humanitarian crisis in the border areas. This act was in defiance of international law and possibly also the agreement he made with Merkel.

REFUGEES

For Erdogan the refugees are useful pawns — a means to exert money and to put all kinds of political pressure on the EU.

The continuing refugee crisis lies behind US/EU deference to Turkey and the categorisation of the PKK as a terrorist organisation in the US and EU.

But there is now tension between the US and Turkey. Turkey frequently condemns the US for allowing arms intended for Kurdish/Syrian YPG to end up in PKK's hands. There is barely concealed outrage by the US at Turkey's war on the PKK and its Syrian/Rojavan allies. The US are unhappy because the repression impedes useful attacks on Daesh.

Some influential elements on the US establishment argue that just as Turkey got it wrong when they opposed the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, they are wrong to oppose a degree of autonomy in Syrian Kurdish areas. On both occasions the Turkish government based its opposition on the notion that such developments would lead to greater calls for autonomy in Kurdish areas of Turkey.

The US, on the other hand, re-

gards the Iraqi KRG as one of the few successes for their policies in the area. It is a key US ally and capitalist statelet. Indeed at times Erdogan has allied with the KRG against the Syrian Kurds.

Despite its official support for Erdogan, the US believe the Rojavan Kurds are the strongest non-Islamist forces in Syria and their social and political weight make them a force that cannot be eliminated.

Erdogan's war on the PKK, the legal political party, the HDP, and the Kurds in Syria, Iraq and Turkey is both brutally and dangerously provocative. It only makes it more likely that the PKK is seen as the only force that can militarily defend Kurdish civilians.

Turkey's "security operations" are undoubtedly aimed at terrorising the Kurds into submission. They want Kurds to relinquish hopes of any degree of autonomy. When the Kurds along with other anti-AKP forces organised peacefully and democratically in the two Turkish elections last year, they got 10-13% of the vote for the HDP. Erdogan wants to reverse the hopes that came along with that success.

Erdogan also has ambitions for a more authoritarian and nationalist state and wants to enhance his personal power as president. Kurdish secularism and desire for a degree of regional self-rule are obstacles to that.

Right wing Turkish nationalism is powerful and the extreme right wing party the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is an ally for Erdogan here. Racist anti-Kurdish gangs were mobilised across Turkey to burn down Kurdish political offices and shops in the lead up to last November's elections.

Erdogan is also an Islamist and is developing an alliance with Saudi Arabia. Before the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) President



Turkish army: "a virtual civil war".

Morsi was deposed, he was in close alliance with him. Erdogan now hopes to use what remains of the MB network to aid his regional ambitions. The avowed secularism, pro-women, multi-ethnic and pro-LGBT policies of the Kurds and the HDP are anathema to that project.

Erdogan is also trying to beat the Kurds down in Syria. Turkey has long had ambitions in oil-rich Northern Syria. The Turkish government financed Islamist militias there. Until recently the AKP expressed preference for Daesh/ISIS over the PKK. Daesh did business, trafficked arms, and organised political recruitment with little hindrance from Turkish security forces.

The AKP is not alone in expansionist ambitions in Syria. The vice head of the Nationalist Movement Party's (MHP) Fatih district office in Istanbul, İbrahim Küçük was recently killed fighting with Turkmen militias. At his funeral other prominent MHP activists were in attendance and some were open about their involvement in fighting in Syria.

But protest is growing, not only in Kurdish areas of Turkey, but across Europe. A national demonstration has been called on 6 March in London — the first such demonstration to be called.

The struggle for democracy for Turkish Kurds also depends on the response of workers and other democrats in Turkey who have also been affected by Erdogan's repression. Journalists are arrested and papers are closed down if they criticise his policies.

Journalists without Borders ranks Turkey 149 out of 180 countries internationally in terms of freedom of the press — the lowest in Europe (if Russia is excluded). Lawyers who defend the civil rights of Kurds or anyone else opposed to the government are persecuted. There was an infamous mass trial of 100 such lawyers in 2013.

Kurds cannot win their liberation alone. To link up with the other ethnicities in Turkey requires a battle for democratic rights of all the workers of Turkey and the overthrow of the despot Erdogan.

Giulio Regeni: murdered by Sisi's cops

By Hugh Edwards

On 25 January, during celebrations in Cairo of the fifth anniversary of the rising against the Mubarak dictatorship in 2011, Giulio Regeni disappeared.

He had been seized by the thugs of the secret services of the Al Sisi government. On 4 February his tortured and broken body was found in a ditch outside Cairo.

Giulio Regeni, aged 28, was a doctoral student from Cambridge University, a socialist militant, and a freelance writer for the Italian left-wing paper *Il Manifesto*, for which he wrote extensively on the Egyptian trade union and labour movement.

His last article, "In Egypt, second life for independent trade unions", is a stirring account of the conference last month in Cairo of the Cen-

tre for Trade Unionism and Workers services (CTUWS).

Regeni described CTUWS as a "beacon of independent trade unionism", and as evidence that, despite widespread repression, the movement to unite and coordinate resistance is becoming "stronger by the day".

By the end of the conference, he relates, "there were 50 groups that had signed on to the closing statement, representing sectors from transport, schools, agriculture, the large informal sector..."

"Notable was the presence of large numbers of women whose actions were sometimes the most appreciated and applauded..."

"The assembly concluded with the formation of a widely representative committee to lay the basis of for a national campaign for trade union freedom".

The Egyptian government tried

to deny any complicity in the death, claiming it was due to a car crash or a drunken brawl. The autopsy in Italy a few days later revealed massive torture and a broken neck.

Anger is mounting, putting Italian prime minister Renzi on the spot over his dealings with Al Sisi, whom he has called "a great statesman".

"Your war is our war, your stability is our stability", said the Italian prime minister, endorsing Al Sisi's self promotion "as the bulwark in the fight against Islamic State". The determining fact is that Italy is Egypt's major commercial partner in Europe, and its third in the world after the USA and China. Deals worth billions in oil, high tech, machinery, etc., are at stake.

One of Renzi's minions was on the point of signing a \$10 billion investment in newly discovered gas

deposits in Egyptian waters when the story of Giulio's murder forced a pause.

Renzi is also aware that his ambitions to restore Italy to the "big league" of European and international powers will require the help of Egypt in Libya, a former Italian colony and only a few hundred miles distant from Italy across the Mediterranean.

To honour Giulio, the "Januarians", a group of Egyptian activists referring to the January 2011 rising against Mubarak, came together in a large demonstration on 5 February outside the Italian embassy in Cairo.

"Giulio was one of us. We will unite with flowers in our hands to honour and remember him. Like so many other Egyptians, he was seized, tortured and murdered".

Every serious socialist and worker in Italy should demand the

truth regarding the death of Giulio and the exposure of Italian collaborative terror, torture and murder against the working and popular masses in Egypt.

The decimated and abysmally weak Italian trade-union movement, and its currently politically impotent radical left, could learn a lot from the tragically brief life of Giulio Regeni and from his internationalism.

4500 academics from across the world have signed a statement calling on the Egyptian authorities "to cooperate with an independent and impartial investigation into all instances of forced disappearances, cases of torture and deaths in detention during January and February 2016".

• bit.ly/regeni

Syria: Catastrophe looms in Aleppo

By Simon Nelson

As *Solidarity* goes to press on 9 February, 35,000 refugees are trapped on the Syria-Turkey border as they flee from a renewed assault by the Assad regime on Syria's largest city, rebel-held Aleppo.

Supplies to Aleppo have been cut off by Russian bombing.

The Turkish government is refusing to let the refugees across the border. A grade less inhumane than EU governments, it is providing food and shelter in areas just on the Syrian side of the border, and says "if necessary, we have to and will let our brothers in".

Turkey is haggling with the EU governments and the USA, hoping to get more aid for itself, less aid for the Kurds, a stronger line against Russia.

If Assad's attack on Aleppo succeeds, those 35,000 people, pawns in that haggling, may be just the first in a big new contingent of des-

perate people in flight. The European Union's and Britain's refusal to take more than token numbers of those refugees will become even more horrible and damaging.

Aleppo used to have over two million people. It has been largely controlled by rebel forces since 2012. Some 300,000 civilians still live there.

Before Russia stepped up its bombing in support of Assad, rebels were able to consolidate their control of towns including Idlib and the area around Aleppo.

Ahrar al Sham, one of the lead rebel groups in the now-collapsed Geneva negotiations, has called on other rebel groups to come and defend the city. But it will be hard for them to withstand the Russian planes, which bomb without regard to civilian casualties.

On top of the human tragedy, Assad's new siege of Aleppo shifts the political balance.

Aleppo has been the stronghold of non-Daesh forces in the Syrian opposition, some of them much

less rancidly Islamist than Daesh. It has non-violent opposition groups like the White Helmets. The fall, or even the encirclement, of Aleppo will increase the relative strength of Daesh within the opposition to Assad.

The Gulf states and Turkey, the main suppliers and financiers of Syrian opposition forces, will not easily accept the fall of Aleppo particularly to Shia militias and regional rivals. Fabrice Balanche of the Washington Institute has speculated that:

"[They may] set up a new rebel umbrella group similar to Jaish al-Fatah, and/or send anti-aircraft missiles to certain brigades...(or) open a new front in northern Lebanon."

"The question is, do Riyadh and Ankara have the means and willingness to conduct such a bold, dangerous action?"

Syria has long been in a terrible impasse. Now it may well get worse.



Areas of control
 ■ Syrian government ■ Rebels ■ Kurds ■ Islamic State
 Source: Institute for the Study of War

Rebel-held Aleppo is cut off by the Syrian government

Australian protests back refugees

By Daisy Thomas

On 3 February, the High Court of Australia ruled that the running and funding of immigration detention centres in foreign countries did not breach the Constitution.

That ruling affects 267 refugees previously transported from Nauru to Australia, many of whom required emergency medical treatment. Of these 267 refugees, there were 54 children and 37 babies. By

this ruling, there is the risk that these refugees could return to conditions threatening their physical, sexual, psychological and emotional health, safety, and wellbeing. There have been reports of sexual assault and rape and of self-harming and suicide in response to the conditions on Nauru.

There have been protests, newspaper articles, and social media activity (#letthemstay) and on 4-5 February a round of rallies in all capital cities.

In Brisbane on 5 February there

was a lunchtime rally outside the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, which saw hundreds of people attending to show their support. Larissa Waters, a Greens senator, spoke out passionately about the dangers of sending back any asylum seekers back to Nauru. Her concerns were echoed by Peter Catt from the Anglican Church. The protest was ended with a rallying call to "free, free the refugees!".

We'll be waiting with bated breath to see the outcome for these individuals.

Landlords to be border cops

By Kelly Rogers

Renting rules introduced under the "Right to Rent" at the beginning on February mean that landlords who let property in England will have to carry out checks on tenants' immigration statuses to establish whether they have the right to rent property in the UK.

Landlords that are found to be letting a home to tenants who don't meet the criteria to stay will be fined up to £1,000 for a first offence, and up to £3,000 thereafter.

Results from the West Midlands, where this scheme was trialled, suggest that the scheme will certainly lead to an increase in racist profiling of tenants, and to a rise in homelessness.

It is widely known that landlords and letting agents are already less

likely to rent a property to a prospective tenant if they're not white, and while anti-discrimination in laws are in place they are often flouted. The "Right to Rent" scheme gives them greater reason and opportunity to profile and refuse BME renters.

The scheme has other problems. Approximately 12 million UK residents don't have passports, which raises concerns that the new rules will make it even harder to people to find homes, on top of extortionate letting fees, high rents, and low-quality housing.

The scheme also smacks of hypocrisy. We've been told time and time again by the government that if we make the lives of landlords more difficult, then they're likely to stop renting their properties and the housing market will suffer. This narrative has been used

to justify the crisis in sub-standard homes, including Conservative MPs voting down Labour's amendment to the Housing Bill earlier in 2016 which would have required private sector landlords to ensure that their properties were fit for human habitation and meet relevant health and safety standards.

We know this narrative to be rubbish, and indeed the Right to Rent scheme will be in effect conscripting landlords in England into controlling UK borders.

The government couldn't bring itself to inconveniencing landlords with the aim of decent housing, but is happy to do so as part of its racist immigration policies, in the name of creating "a hostile environment for illegal migrants".

What we'll see then is greater misery, poverty and homelessness for migrants in the UK.

Denmark to seize refugees' property

By Lisa Lindstrom

Refugees seeking asylum in Denmark will have their belongings confiscated by the police, in order to finance their own asylum process.

This is the result of the new "asylum package" bill, or the so-called "jewellery law". The broad parliamentary agreement was proposed by the Danish right-wing liberal party Venstre, the right-wing parties in parliament including the Danish People's Party and the Conservatives, and the Social Democrats. The bill was put to a vote in the parliament, Folketing, on January 26 and will be in effect from February 5.

The discussions on the Danish parliament's new "asylum package" have been going on throughout November and reached an agreement on December 7 last year.

One of the consequences of the new law is giving Danish police the opportunity to search asylum seekers for money and valuable belongings of certain sizes and kinds.

Asylum seekers are allowed to keep their phone, watch, personal belongings such as wedding rings, and up to 3000 Danish Krone in cash (about £290). Everything else will be confiscated and sold in order to pay for "food and room" during the asylum process. Other parts of the new law will make it more difficult to obtain permanent



Some refugees in Denmark are on hunger strike

residence permits and temporary residence permit will be shortened from five to two years.

Danish politics has seen a heavy upsurge in right-wing ideology in the past decade, and been known for their hard rules on immigrants and asylum seekers. Last autumn, the parliament decided to cut almost half of benefits given to newly arrived refugees. The argument put forward for this policy by integration minister Inger Støjberg was to motivate people coming to Denmark to start working. Denmark has also since the early 2000s been one of the countries in Europe requiring a language test in order to become a Danish citizen, with the Danish test being ranked as the hardest one to pass.

Left-wing critics of the Danish immigration policies include Danish parties Enhedslisten and Socialistisk Folkeparti. International critics include UN profiles Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon.

Global union target of disinformation campaign

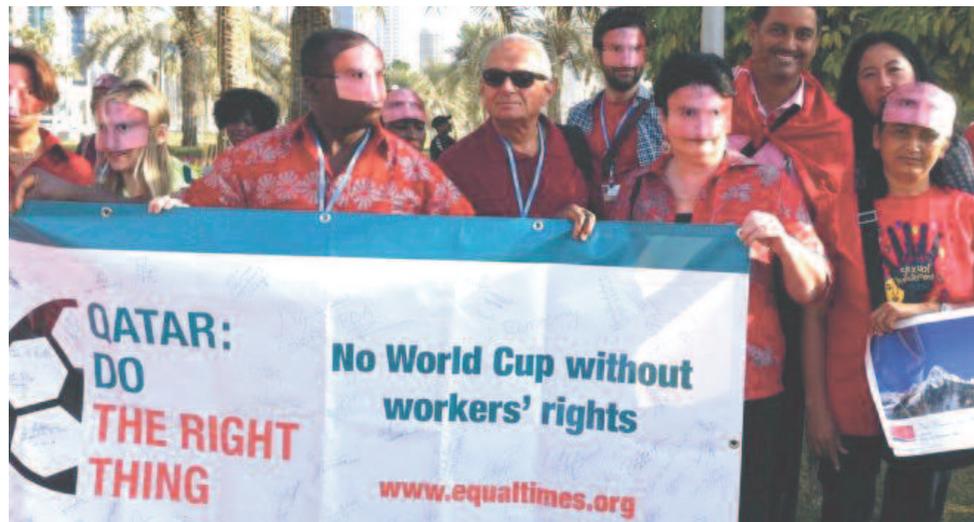
ERIC LEE

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is not an organisation that many of you will have heard of. Which is odd, considering that it is one of the largest membership organisations in the world.

The ITUC is a federation of 333 national affiliates, mostly trade union centers like the TUC in Britain and the AFL-CIO in the US, and it represents about 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories.

The ITUC suffers from being somewhat remote from ordinary workers, as those workers join unions which in turn affiliate to national trade union centres, and it is those centres — not the workers — who are the ITUC's "members". It also gets very little mass media attention, though in recent years its campaign against the exploitation of migrant labour in the Gulf states has begun to change that.

This week, a strange news story appeared on top of the ITUC's website with the title "Disinformation campaign against the ITUC."



It claimed that the ITUC "has for some time been facing a disinformation campaign by unidentified persons, in connection with our campaign to defend the rights of migrant workers in Qatar including those preparing infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. This campaign has included the dissemination of fake videos and other materials, setting up of

fake social media accounts and various other techniques aimed at the ITUC and at individual people. This week the ITUC received confirmation that ITUC email accounts have been hacked, and falsified material inserted into emails."

Searching the web for what the ITUC may be referring to, one comes across some very

odd content. For example, someone using the name "Big Jack Jones" has posted an article claiming that the ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow personally profits from the organisation's use of an Australian-based media consultancy. The links in that story point nowhere, and inaccuracies in it — such as referring to the International Labor Organization, a UN body — as the ITUC's "parent" show a lack of basic understanding of how the trade union movement works.

In addition to articles like that one, there have been a number of other recent articles, some coming from India, alleging growing discontent with Burrow's leadership from within the ranks of affiliated unions. At the last ITUC congress, held in Berlin in 2014, Burrow nearly ran for re-election unopposed until there was a last-minute challenge from Jim Baker, a former US union official. Burrow won a convincing victory at that congress.

If you've never heard of the ITUC before, it's a pity that you're hearing about it for the first time now.

The good news is that maybe this is evidence that the ITUC's campaigning on Qatar has touched a nerve.

SNP and Tories: cuts are better than 1p tax rise

SCOTLAND

By Ann Field

In response to the decision of the SNP Holyrood government to cut £350 millions from local government funding — at a cost of some 15,000 jobs — Scottish Labour Party leader Kezia Dugdale has called for a 1p increase in income tax rates in Scotland.

Although the power to vary the different income tax bands will not be devolved to Scotland until next year, Holyrood already has the power to increase (or cut) the income tax rates currently set by the Westminster government.

Dugdale's proposal enjoys broad support among Labour Party members. Some affiliated unions, such as the GMB and ASLEF, have also publicly backed it. It chimes in with the attitude: "Better for everyone to chip in a bit extra than to see jobs and services cut."

Under the proposal, no-one on less than £11,000 a year would be affected (because they do not pay income tax anyway).

And anyone paid between £11,000 and £20,000 would receive compensatory payments through local authorities — paid for out of the overall "kitty" of the extra income tax — which would cancel out the increase they pay in income tax.

The impact of the tax rise would be broadly progressive. It is certainly true that the more you earn, the more you pay.

According to a study of the proposals carried out by the Resolution Foundation, the top 10% of earners would pay £1,000 or more — an extra 1.3% of their income — while

middle-income households would pay an extra 0.4% of their income.

Someone on £25,000 a year would pay £140 more in tax, someone on £30,000 would pay £200 more, someone on an MSP's salary would pay £481 more, and anyone on First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's goldplated salary would pay £1,447 more.

But, clearly, anyone on more than £20,000 a year will, to some degree, be worse off. And this will include many workers, such as public sector workers, who have been subject to prolonged pay freezes and/or minimal pay rises.

Another problem with the proposal is that there does not seem to have been any statement by the Scottish Labour Party that it is a temporary measure for just twelve months — until Holyrood receives another tranche of powers, which would allow it to target tax rises only at the better off.

The proposal to increase income tax is therefore far from "ideal". Having said that, none of its supporters argue that it is "ideal" (although some come perilously close to doing so).

And while socialists are certainly in favour of increasing — by much more than 1% — taxation of the rich, Dugdale's proposal is not what we advocate as a response to the SNP's cuts in the funding of local authorities.

Our aim is to build a campaign involving first and foremost trade unions, CLPs and community groups, which exerts enough pressure on local authorities to pass "no-cuts" budgets (which are not the same as illegal budgets).

No-cuts budgets could arguably be achieved by using council reserves and council borrowing powers, renegotiating debt repayments, and deploying some "creative council accountancy", alongside putting more pressure on Holyrood to find more funding for local authorities.

In the "bigger picture" the answer to cuts in local authority funding (and Westminster cuts in grants to Holyrood) involves measures such as a wealth tax, scrapping Trident

and using the money saved for social spending, and the writing-off of the debts of local authorities by a nationalised banking system.

But pointing to the limitations of a mainstream social-democratic proposal to raise income tax rates by 1p is far removed from the rabid and hypocritical response which the proposal has triggered from the SNP.

When Labour MSPs moved the proposal in Holyrood last week as an amendment to the SNP budget for the 2016/17 financial year, the SNP were vehement in their opposition.

And the Tories even promised to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the SNP in opposing the proposal to raise income tax!

The SNP profess concern about the impact of the proposal on the low-paid — the very people who have suffered most under SNP austerity and cuts in funding to local authorities — and claim, wrongly, that the increase in income tax will hit the lower paid harder than the higher paid.

AMNESIA

As usual, the SNP is also suffering from selective amnesia.

In 1999, when the first Holyrood elections took place, the SNP campaigned under the slogan "A Penny for Scotland", i.e. an increase of 1p in income tax rates. This, boasted the SNP, would "generate £230 millions per annum to spend on Scottish health, housing and education."

But in 2002 the SNP dropped the policy with its characteristic make-it-up-as-you-go-along bravado:

"Gordon Brown has increased taxes and put more money into the public purse. So, the argument we put forward in 1999 has been comprehensively won by the SNP. We have forced Gordon Brown into a most spectacular u-turn."

In other words: A 1p increase to raise money for health, housing and education was a good idea in 1999; but now it's an off-the-wall attack on the low-paid.

The SNP's response to the proposal — "Labour's tax grab", as they have taken to

calling it in typically Tory language — underlines the fact that the SNP is the pro-austerity party of low taxation, cuts in spending, cuts in jobs, and privatisation.

The Tartan Tories are back with a vengeance.

Build the BMA?

LETTER

I am a little concerned about the call in *Solidarity* to build the British Medical Association (Solidarity, 392).

It's not that I think it's wrong; rather that it would benefit from some further calls to address the anomalous position of the BMA.

Firstly, the BMA is not affiliated to the TUC. The more it acts like a proper trade union (like now), the stronger the case for it to affiliate.

Secondly, the BMA is a craft union, organising one relatively-privileged section of health workers. This can lead it to play an unhelpful, sectional role at times (for instance during the establishment of the NHS).

Unfortunately, health workers currently seem to have the choice of craft unions or huge general unions in which they are swamped by bureaucrats taking decisions above their heads. Time to raise the call for one union for all health workers? Or at least stress the importance of doctors' unity with nurses, midwives, physios, cleaners and other grades. (I know *Solidarity* has also called for nurses and doctors to take action together.)

So, build the BMA? Yes, but also propose that the BMA affiliate to the TUC and unite with other health unions with a long-term goal of one union for all health workers.

Jessica Bradwell, Hackney

The great SNP quiz

Your chance to test your knowledge of the SNP and all things SNP — business dealings, florist's bills and "banter".
<http://bit.ly/1mpnrSc>

Making Europe an ideal again

On 9 February, in Berlin, former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis launched a new “Democracy in Europe Movement”. It seems not so much a movement as a personal vehicle.

But the spirit of its manifesto — demanding, by 2025, a EU constituent assembly that will create a democratic federal Europe — is right.

It aims beyond the petty “what’s best for our little corner” or “what’s safest” calculations which dominate the official debate, and dares to restate the old ideals which motivated calls for a United States of Europe as early as the mid-19th century.

“A Europe of reason, liberty, tolerance, and imagination, made possible by comprehensive transparency, real solidarity, and authentic democracy”.

The first radical journal which Karl Marx wrote for was called the *German-French Year-books*.

He looked to a day when “the day of the German resurrection will be heralded by the crowing of the Gallic cock”. His Communist Manifesto was written for an international organisation, mostly of migrant workers, active in France, in Belgium, in Germany, in England.

Marx was educated in German philosophy, learned socialism from French workers, formed the outlines of his distinctive theory in Brussels, and gave most of his life to studying Scottish and English political economy.

INSPIRED

The creation, from a continent wrecked for centuries by incessant national and dynastic wars, of a Europe of mutual enrichment, and melded traditions, inspired many other democrats.

In all fields, a Europe of cosmopolitan culture, free movement, diminished borders, is an advance not just “for Britain”, or for this or that grouping, but for the whole continent.

To take an offbeat example: as recently as the 1930s, André Weil became an epoch-making figure just because he broke the chauvinist barriers which had stopped French mathematicians learning from German mathematics. There was an equivalent in England in the 1820s: a students’ revolt at Cambridge University was needed to break down the narrowmindedness which had paralysed English mathematics for a hundred years

after the death of Isaac Newton, banning the use of “German” notation.

The arrogance, and shameless capitalist dogmatism of the EU leaders, their drive to make the rules of the single market and the eurozone axioms to be enforced by unelected officials whatever the cost to human lives, is drowning those ideals in a quagmire of bureaucracy.

And in so doing, it is nourishing narrow-minded reflex responses, nationalism, xenophobia, migrant-hating.

Varoufakis is right: “The European Union will be democratised. Or it will disintegrate!”

He is also right in his warnings: “If we return to the cocoon of the nation-state, we are going to have a fault line somewhere along the River Rhine and the Alps. Everything to the east of the Rhine and north of the Alps would become depressed economies and the rest of the Europe would be in the territory of stagflation economics, of high unemployment and high prices.

“This Europe could even produce a major war or, if not an actual war, so much hardship that nations would turn against each other... We would have condemned the whole world to at least one lost generation.

“Out of such an event, I counsel my friends that the Left never benefits. It will always be the ultra-nationalists, the racists, the bigots and Nazis that benefit”.

The mess of the major campaigns aimed at Britain’s EU in-or-out referendum, likely to be on 23 June, confirms his judgement.

Three campaigns are squabbling over who gets the official Electoral Commission franchise as “the” exit campaign.

Vote Leave is run by Dominic Cummings, previously the Tory party’s “director of strategy”, then an adviser to Michael Gove as education minister, notorious for his arrogant abuse even of other Tories and other officials. It is figureheaded by former Tory chancellor Nigel Lawson, who is now mostly active as a climate-change-denying crank.

Shamefully, the leading Labour MPs who support exit, Kate Hoey and Kelvin Hopkins, first linked their Labour Leave campaign to Vote Leave.

Now Hoey and Hopkins, but not John Mills, the millionaire who’s been financing Labour Leave, have jumped ship to Grassroots Out.

Not an improvement, because Grassroots Out is financed by UKIP millionaire Arron



Banks, was founded by two right-wing Tory MPs, and advertises UKIP leader Nigel Farage as a key supporter.

Grassroots Out may merge with the third campaign, Leave.EU, also funded by Banks, also backed by UKIP. If there is a shade of difference between Leave.EU and Vote Leave, it is that Leave.EU is more straight-for-the-nerve anti-migrant and Vote Leave is more for a free-market Britain, free of annoying “over-regulation” (read: worker protections) from the EU.

LEFT-EXIT?

Although some left-wingers back exit — Kelvin Hopkins is a left-winger — they have no distinct voice, and figure in this squabble only as backers of this or that Tory/ UKIP faction.

That is logical. Re-raising borders between Britain and the EU countries may contribute to the racists’, xenophobes’, and ultra-capitalists’ aims of excluding migrants and destroying worker protections. It cannot possibly contribute to left-wing aims.

On the “in” side, Britain Stronger in Europe has no rival for the official Electoral Commission franchise. It argues that remaining in the EU is good for “stability”, for “se-

curity”, for “business”. The message is as uninspiring as a wet sock to the millions whose lives have been made unstable and insecure, and who have been exploited or sacked by “business”, through the global capitalist crash of 2008 and the EU leaders’ management of its sequels in Europe.

Labour, anxious not to repeat the fiasco of its merging with the Tories in the Better Together campaign in Scotland, has an independent “in” campaign, Labour In For Britain. But notice that — “for Britain”, not for workers.

The campaign is led by Labour right-winger Alan Johnson. Its profile is feeble, and mostly an echo of the arguments of Britain Stronger in Europe, with a quiet footnote about workers’ rights.

Socialists need a campaign which opposes exit from the EU, not in the name of endorsing the existing EU, but in the name of taking it as the start-point for battle to bring down barriers, level up conditions, extend democracy, and weld workers’ solidarity across the continent.

In order to do that, Solidarity has initiated the Workers’ Europe campaign, campaign.workerseurope.net, and works with the Another Europe Is Possible campaign, www.anothereurope.org

When a history book is really about the present

Reviews and critical commentary on *The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism*

“This book is an amazing textbook ... [it] presents the material in such a way as to show the whole dialogue between two species of socialism — crudely, between Shachtman and Cannon — as it developed and, through the critical years, the development of the ideas of bureaucratic collectivism and the Third Camp theories. It keeps track, not just of Trotskyism, but of Marxism, of socialism ... This book gives us material to think about what socialism really is.”

Ed Strauss

“There are some who, for whatever reasons, do not think there is much (or any) importance to such history ... To deny that there is anything useful to learn from such excavations and explorations is inconsistent with a serious attitude toward the discipline of history, as well as toward political theory, not to mention Marxism. Sean Matgamna has performed a genuine service for scholars and activists.”

Paul Le Blanc

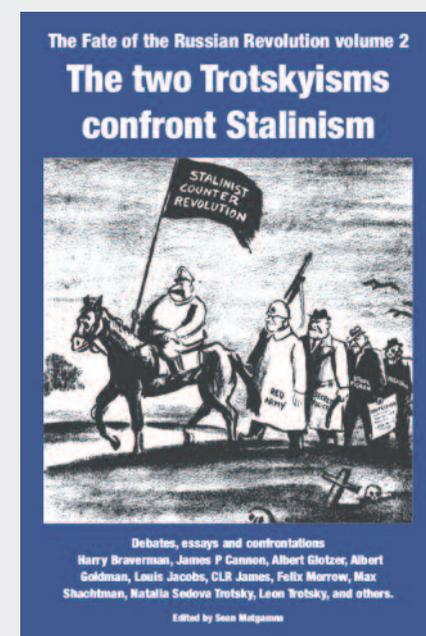
“It can be argued that at least some Trotskyists, the ‘heterodox’, have something to offer in outlining ways in which the left can be both opposed to capitalism and democrats, above all in the way in which they confronted a much stronger ‘socialist’ power that had dispensed with all pretensions to democracy. That in facing up to this ‘bad news’, the 1940s dissidents offered signposts for the future. For that reason alone Matgamna’s case should be taken extremely seriously.”

Andrew Coates

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NHS cash squeeze: Tax the

By Kelly Rogers

The NHS is demonstrably very strapped for cash, as a long list of the biggest hospital Trusts in the country are revealing the largest overspends in the history of the NHS.

The trust with the largest overspend, Barts Health NHS Trust, based in East London, is on course to have a run up a deficit of at least £134.9 million (10% of its budget) by the end of the NHS' financial year on 31 March. Its overspend is 69% bigger than that in 2014-5, which totalled £79.6 million.

Jeremy Hunt, the Health Secretary, had earmarked £1.8 billion of extra funding for next year, but it looks like this figure will be insufficient, and will be used to plug NHS deficit, rather than go towards any improvements, such as more staff, or greater resources.

Trusts are stuck in a vicious circle where

lack of cash and limited resources mean they're struggling to provide the service required, leading to fines being levied for missing key targets. They're striving to ensure that money procured through fines will be reinvested in the Trusts, so they can spend less in the future.

Some are saying that next year will be "make or break" for the NHS, as Trusts struggle to keep their deficits in check. It's hardly surprising when one considers the cuts which have been made to the NHS over recent years.

Concerns have also been raised about "horse-trading" between agencies and hospitals, where locum doctors and nurses are seeing more generous salaries when they work for agencies. This has meant that huge numbers of staff are leaving the NHS for agencies, resulting in hospitals having to pay huge premiums on top of wages. For example, of the £80 million-a-year spent on

agency staff at Barts, £30 million comprises charges made by staffing agencies.

This too, is unsurprising however when considering that NHS wages have been cut but band conditions have lacked flexibility. Nurses, for example, have had their pay cut by 10% in real terms since 2010.

The cash squeeze is having a huge impact on our NHS. It is the background to the current dispute over junior doctors' new contracts (which if implemented would mean a rise in hours and cuts in pay). It is behind the government's intransigent stance on the contract issue. And it will increase pressure for further privatisation in the NHS.

In order for the NHS to provide the care we need, then we need more funding coming from central government to employ more permanent staff, improve pay and conditions, and increase resources.

For a fully-funded NHS we need to tax the rich!

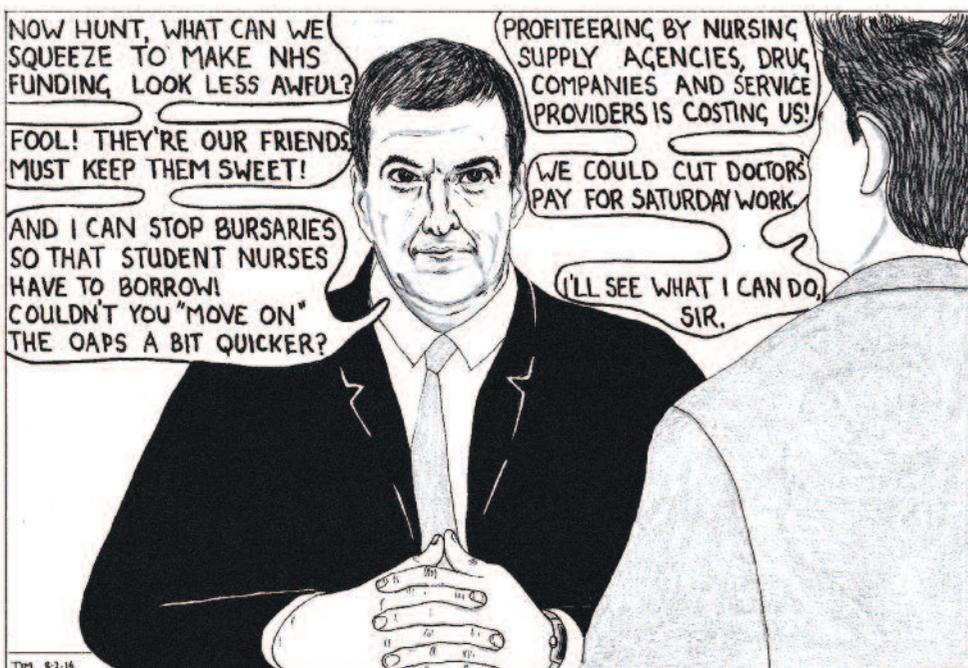
"Since this dispute has started the BMA has shown junior doctors. Unfortunately the government is not meeting our demands we are going to have to escalate our strike day is not going to be enough to change the

"The newspapers make it sound like we're just a part of it. This is about the quality of care that we want. Let the Government get away with wrecking the NHS."

The media will probably attack us for it, but we're not. They're attacking us anyway though! It's not their argument on its own. You need something to back up

"The government are trying to put through a contract that is the failure of the NHS."

It's definitely a deliberate attack. And the government doesn't run for profit. It is going to force the NHS to be a public will think that privatisation is the right option



Why we joined the protest

Junior doctors on the central London protest on 6 February spoke to *Solidarity*

"I'm on the demonstration because I wanted to do my bit to show we're not going away. To keep the pressure up. Jeremy Hunt is talking nonsense. You have to wonder — if he's telling the truth than why do virtually no doctors agree with him?"

It looks like after the negotiations with the BMA the government might just try and force the contract through. So we shouldn't ease off. That would be a disaster at a time when things might go one way or the other."

George Eliot, junior doctor Nuneaton

"We're protesting against the contract: it will force us to work particularly unsociable hours in A&E and ITU as anaesthetists. Plus alongside this we're going to have so much student debt that we could not afford to live properly. This shouldn't be a profession for the elite, and the fewer people who are left the harder it is.

We need to get the message to the press that with this protest we're not even asking for more, even though we're working too hard as it is."

Roselyn Perring, Anaesthetist at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, and Karen Stacey Anaesthetist at Hillingdon Hospital

A nurse and Labour Party member writes to Shadow Health Secretary Heidi Alexander about why she should join junior doctors' picket lines — bit.ly/heidiletter

"Doctors' ideas have ch

Emma Runswick, medical student, socialist and British Medical Association activist in Manchester, spoke to *Solidarity*.

Negotiations have been going on between the BMA and the government for three years, since the government approached the BMA to renegotiate our contract.

We agreed with a lot of things the government said, particularly about training; we wanted to negotiate. However, when we entered negotiations they weren't interested in the things we wanted; they wanted negative changes on unsocial hours, and pay progression, and everything else that's in the new contract.

The BMA walked out of talks and the government referred the contract to the supposedly independent DDRB [Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration]. The DDRB doesn't include any clinicians — it's mainly made up of Human Resources officials — and it was the first time they'd been asked to rule on any contract issues. They came down pretty much entirely on the side of NHS employers. The DDRB made 23 recommendations, which were mainly awful.

The BMA consulted and members said the recommendations were unacceptable, but the government said this had to be the basis for negotiation. There was a period of limbo and then last August Jeremy Hunt said he'd impose the contract.

At that point it all kicked off... Suddenly junior doctors who'd never previously been particularly interested in either the BMA or NHS issues were demanding the BMA did something. We were flooded by new members. In June last year we had about 150,000 members and now it's 170,000 — more than 80 percent of all doctors in UK, and the big majority of the membership increase would

be junior doctors.

There have been similar issues before; for instance the Modernising Medical Careers plan, which was about training, in 2004-5, caused an upswing of activism which died down. There's never been such a direct, out-and-out attack on the terms and conditions of doctors — not just on training, but hours, pay and everything else.

I think that big influx will permanently change the culture of the BMA for the better. It has sometimes been a bit sedentary in the past. We've got Council [national executive] elections happening in March. Currently there are three juniors on a Council out of 34 members. Loads more juniors are standing this time, which is great. Also standing are people who haven't been active in the BMA before because of its weaknesses, but now see the opportunity to push for it to be a more active trade union. Six of us are standing under the banner Doctors Represent, on a manifesto which includes a strong contract campaign, fighting NHS privatisation, making the union more democratic and transparent, and integration and training for new and grassroots members. We are supporting other left-leaning candidates too.

BMA

If we do well this could be very significant in terms of making the BMA a politically better as well as more effective organisation.

The major issue in the dispute is about how we define what social and unsocial hours are. If we lose on that issue it will hit every other staff group. People at the top end of the pay scale could probably take a 30 percent real terms pay cut [if the redefinition of social/unsocial goes ahead], but for other healthcare workers lower down the pay scales redefining Saturday as a normal working day would be devastating.

e rich!

own real strength in the way it has organised not willing to negotiate. In order for us to win our action. Its been made clear that a single the government's mind."

Pete Campbell, BMA junior doctors committee

up in arms about our pay packet, but that's just patients get. It's about whether we're going to NHS.

re should go through with the strikes. I suppose al but it's obvious Jeremy Hunt doesn't listen to ck up the argument."

Junior doctor, Queen Elizabeth, Glasgow

tract that puts patients at risk and will lead to

ernment cannot understand a service that S to failure by undermining staff, so that the tion."

Anonymous junior doctor



On Saturday 6 February thousands of junior doctors, their supporters, and other NHS campaigners staged a sit-in outside Downing street

anged; they've realised that they are workers"



More broadly their aim of redefining Saturday as a normal day is to help redefine when other workers outside the NHS can take sick leave or visit a doctor; it is about saying, don't go to the doctor during the week, go on Saturday, when you're off work.

The attack on NHS workers is also part of the Tories' ultimate aim of privatising the service. If the contract goes through in anything like its current form, we are going to lose huge numbers of doctors, and then nurses and other healthworkers, and at a much greater rate than we're losing them now. The NHS is already at critical point, so we'll have a totally overstretched and demoralised workforce.

With a health service in crisis, the next obvious response will be to get private companies to step in and take a much greater role. Junior doctors increasingly feel the government's stated reasons for wanting this contract are absurd, so there must be another reason; people are starting to make the links.

Take the case of Dr Chris Day, and the fight with NHS management about whether doctors have whistle-blowing rights (see 54000doctors.org). People are making the links between attacks on staff, underfunding and the fact that the government don't really care about patient safety, and linking that to privatisation of the NHS.

The campaign has gone alright so far, al-

though we've made mistakes. I think offering to meet the government at ACAS was a good move, and cancelling the initial strikes gave us more time to prepare. I wouldn't have cancelled the strikes on 26 and 27 January, but I'm not in the negotiating team. Ultimately we're still on the front foot. We're winning the arguments, where we're allowed to make them in the media, and more importantly with the public. We haven't moved on any of our key positions. We haven't been sold out, which was a possibility at the beginning of the dispute.

SELL-OUT

The committee gets a lot of abuse when they cancel or postpone action, so a sell out is inconceivable at this point.

The committee is made up of junior doctors themselves and if they gave up Saturdays or safeguards on unsocial hours they would be slaughtered. The fact we got Johann Malawana elected as chair of the Junior Doctors Committee has helped, as he was someone who wanted to stay firm and take action. So did the huge vote for action (98 percent for strikes, 99.4 percent for action short). And the big turnout on the last strike.

That 10 February has been downgraded (so it still includes emergency cover) will increase turnout. There are lots of doctors who are very angry and want to fight but aren't quite ready for withdrawing emergency care. By taking another day of action we can build up a head of steam.

We need to be continually holding days of action, not necessarily prolonged action, but intermittent.

We need to put the Trusts under pressure, make them worried about missing targets, and try to split individual Trusts off from the NHS employers as a whole. In some Trusts the management are reasonably supportive and on our side. If we can do that and create

a publicity problem for the politicians, then we can start to split up their side, while our side remains strong.

Some doctors are worried about losing money, particularly people who are the only earners in their household, and younger people, but BMA Charities can assist those people in difficult circumstances.

In some wards, where there's a good relationship with other staff, nurses are completely onside, wearing the badges and so on. In other places, their knowledge about the dispute is the same as or maybe worse than general public's level of knowledge, for instance some nurses have been repeating Jeremy Hunt's claim we would get an 11 percent pay rise under his deal. We have people specifically working on counteracting these claims with other staff.

The link between the doctors' fight and the NHS bursary fight by student nurses and other allied health professionals has been really excellent. BMA members, including our Junior Doctors' Committee, have been very supportive of the NHS Bursary struggle and we've had support in return. And that has strengthened our relationship with nurses, particularly nurses who are doing teaching. When people walk out for an hour in defence of bursaries on 10 February, they should be joining the pickets and that will hopefully strengthen things further. In Manchester the student Save our NHS campaign that I'm involved in is building those links, with an event in that hour with speakers from both struggles, and from the free education campaign too.

We should be demanding that the Labour Party explicitly and actively supports the strike action – members of Parliament should get on the picket lines. We should be demanding that they support the NHS Bill to reverse privatisation, and that they wake up and recognise the problems with health

devolution, including the threat it poses to national terms and conditions for staff, as well as everything else. That also applies to councillors, who should know better than to listen to George Osborne but unfortunately have sometimes gone along with the devolution agenda.

Doctors' ideas have changed; they've realised that they are workers as well as professionals, and therefore that they are open to attacks by the Tories, and just as easily lied about. Seeing the way the media lies has had a really dramatic effect, as people clock that other groups of workers must also have been lied about. Obviously this hasn't been so for everyone, but it has been for many. I think that's where the opening for socialist politics is — the realisation that we are workers and that we can be open and proud about organising in a trade union, not just an apolitical professional association.

I went to Wigan trades council recently, and I said go to the picket lines, yes, but tell them about your union, what it does, and basic things like asking postal workers not to cross the picket lines, basic labour movement solidarity. And talk to them about politics. And people are receptive to that – really receptive to the public turning up and expressing their support. I'm not so sure how socialist papers will go down, but why not try!

The other political angle, something which Yannis [Gourtsoyannis, prominent BMA, People's Assembly and Momentum NHS activist] has been successful with, is spelling out the links between our fight and fighting austerity, that if we're going to stand up for patient safety, that means taking a broader view of patient interests by opposing austerity as a whole.

This dispute has pushed most junior doctors to the left. Some have a very long way to go, but the process is not over yet.

How Labour councils can beat the Tories' cuts

By Sacha Ismail

What are you advocating?

Firstly, that Labour councils and the Labour Party more generally campaign explicitly and actively for the restoration of the funding which local authorities have lost since 2010 and are going to lose in the years ahead. At the moment, the demand is not even being made.

Secondly, that instead of insisting that their decisions about spending and cuts are not up for discussion, councils and councillors encourage a process of discussion in the party and the labour movement more generally, helping to create a Great Labour Movement Debate about the way forward. There should be open meetings of Labour members and affiliated trade unionists in each council area to discuss what is happening and how to respond.

Thirdly, that councils should seek to build and lead a local campaign to confront the government and win restored funding – involving the community and workers in mass demonstrations, strikes, and direct action.

Fourthly, that in order to be taken seriously in leading such a campaign, in order to boost it, and in order to ramp up confrontation with the Tories, councils should find way to avoid making cuts now – including scrapping wasteful spending like use of agency workers and consultants, cutting top salaries and perks, borrowing money, running down reserves, selling off non-service-providing properties, juggling between accounts and financial years, and so on. Councils are large organisations with complex finances which give them quite a bit of leeway – to buy time, and use that time to build a fightback.

Fifthly, that councils set budgets based on social need, not cuts.

You mean a deficit budget?

Not exactly. Councils can borrow money, but unlike central government, they cannot operate in a sustained way on the basis of a deficit, borrowing more or less at will or printing money. Cuts cannot be stopped just by super-clever budget-making. But, yes, I do mean a budget which preserves services and jobs, and fills the revenue gap by planning to get money back from the government.

Couldn't council officials simply veto a

budget like that?

No. Councillors can override top officials' objections, after a period of delay.

Recent legal changes make a defiant stance easier rather than more difficult. A council tax set by a council making a needs-based budget will be valid even if the budget is contested, whereas in the 1980s councils could not validly set or collect rates (the local property tax which councils then levied) until they set a legal budget.

Yes, but however you look at it, the sort of budget you want would break the rules. The Tories would just send in commissioners to take over!

They could. The Secretary of State has wide powers: if he doesn't like what a council is doing, basically, he can act. He can do that even without an illegal budget, without any claim of illegality.

But think. If the Tories send in unelected officials to impose decisions against an elected Labour council with strong local support and a defiant community, they will not be in a strong position to impose extra cuts. In Tower Hamlets, where the Tories sent in commissioners for different reasons, they did not impose cuts. Labour did, once it returned to office in the new mayoral election!

In fact, the most desirable situation for the Tories is the current one: having Labour councils act as their agents in imposing cuts on the local community.

If we're really fighting the cuts, then a move by the Tories to send in commissioners is not a disaster. To see it as a disaster is really to say, let's not do anything that will upset the Tories.

For that reason, probably the Tories would be slow about sending in commissioners. They would first try to play chicken, daring the council to continue with its budget until the council ran out of revenues and panicked, as Liverpool council did in late 1985. Then they would make their legal moves against the council, or councillors, after that.

Budget-juggling could give the labour movement time to build a campaign. For example the Tory/right wing independent council in Stoke, for its own reasons, is using £15.5 million of reserves to ward off further cuts in 2016-17. Bromley Unite members, in their fight against cuts by their Tory council, have highlighted that it holds £300 million in



The Clay Cross councillors built a campaign around their defiance — and won

reserves. That is unusually high. But the 58 Labour-led English councils outside London hold £4.5 billion in general reserves and £1.3 billion in housing revenue and capital reserves. And councils have extensive, though limited, borrowing powers.

That gives enough leeway to build a campaign, though not to avoid cuts for any long time. In fact, after a while, the council should actively seek to provoke the government to put itself on the front line by intervening: for instance, by transferring capital funds to expenditure without permission (normally you have to apply to do so), or withholding payments of VAT and PAYE.

So, one way or another, you'd end up with the government intervening. And then you'd be sure to lose!

The only two Labour councils which have confronted Tory governments in the past, and stood firm to the last, Poplar in the 1920s and Clay Cross in the 1970s, both won victories, even though in their time they were isolated and other Labour councils were complying with government policy.

The Labour councils which talked about confronting the Tories in the 1980s, like Lambeth and Liverpool, failed because they backed down, not because of legal action by the Tories. That legal action came after the councillors had retreated.

So even one council defying the Tories could win. If a few big ones did, let alone a

large range of Labour councils across the country, they would almost surely win. Many would be good. But one has to take the lead. And, if it comes to it, it can win on its own.

That is all very well, but the Poplar councillors were jailed. The Clay Cross councillors were disqualified and bankrupted. Lambeth and Liverpool councillors, in the 1980s, were heavily fined.

There are some risks to councillors, just as there are risks to workers every time we strike. The risks to councillors are much smaller than they used to be. Councillors can still be disqualified, but it is much harder; and they can no longer be jailed or heavily fined and bankrupted, as they could be in the past. Councillors should show some leadership! People's lives are being ruined by the cuts. If you don't want a fightback, then you don't have to be a councillor.

Would people respond?

Many towns and areas have seen big mobilisations, for instance to save a local hospital — in Lewisham, more than twenty thousand on a local demonstration, and sustained mass campaigning, which saved the hospital. If councillors tried to take on the Tories, there would be a response. As there was to Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership campaign, which at the start many people thought to be a hopeless token effort.

Is it worth the risks?

No struggle is guaranteed to win, or risk-free, but what's the alternative? To let our public services be trashed — and very likely have councils break the law not by defying cuts, but by failing to provide statutory services! That is what it is coming to now.

Workers and communities will fight the cuts anyway — on a bigger or smaller scale. The question is whether Labour at least tries to be part of that, or whether it opposes and, inevitably, denounces anti-cuts struggles.

Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership disagrees with you, doesn't it?

Yes, and we disagree with them. There should be open debate. The few Labour councillors who have made a stand against the cuts should not be victimised. Right now Haringey councillor Gideon Bull has been suspended by his Labour group for speaking out against cuts to services for vulnerable adults. The more our movement discusses its strategy and tactics in taking on the Tories, the stronger it will be.

We can continue this debate while we fight to elect the largest possible number of Labour councillors across the country.

Bernie Sanders supporters rally... in London!

By Gerry Bates

The Bernie Sanders presidential campaign is used to rallies a bit bigger than just under a hundred people.

The turnout for this one was not bad, though, because it took place not in London! Organised by Sanders supporters in London, the meeting was addressed by Sanders' brother Larry, who is a UK Green Party activist, by Owen Jones and by chair Eric Lee, who Workers' Liberty people will know better as the founder and organiser of LabourStart. Most of those present were American, but there was a good number of British lefties too.

In addition to the general interests of the topic, the discussion was very wide-ranging and informative, covering everything from gun control, to racism and the politics of America's black communities, to the nature

of the Clinton campaign in London (\$500 dollars to get into the last event).

Among the Americans, there seemed to be a mix of views from pretty moderate liberalism (one person argued that Sanders should redefine socialism as "entrepreneurial capitalism") to more like socialism. Some said they were also active in the Labour Party and in Momentum, and Momentum NHS got a good response. The discussion didn't focus too much on the American labour movement (though Eric did talk about union bureaucrats backing Clinton and grassroots enthusiasm for Sanders).

Owen Jones' speech also dodged this question, talking about Labour's labour movement roots and links with the unions, but not really addressing the core nature of the Democratic machine. In other ways his speech was excellent — quoting Frederick Douglass ("Power concedes nothing without

a demand. It never did and it never will") and highlighting the long, rich history of working-class and emancipatory struggles in America, from the Civil War to Eugene Debs' socialists to Black Lives Matter, though the problem was posed when he also included FDR's New Deal in that list.

Larry, Owen and Eric all stressed that for many years Sanders has stood by his views, even when they were unpopular, and hammered away at a clear, sharp, consistent, positive message — something the British left, of various stripes and degrees of radicalism, has not been very good at. That is what made the remarkable upsurge around his candidacy possible.

Whatever we think about how American politics is likely to shift, and the limits the nature of its bourgeois two party system places on that, we should be inspired by that approach and draw the lessons for what we are doing in Britain.

A sad but inspiring celebration of Charlie Hebdo

Tom Harris reviews *L'Humour à mort*

Daniel and Emanuel Leconte have made a moving although imperfect film about the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, focussing on the massacre by Islamist gunmen at their headquarters last year and the immediate aftermath.

The first thing to say is that, for a British viewer acquainted with the socialist or liberal left, one of the main emotions the film evokes is shame.

If someone was in the grim position of having to rely on the British left for their information about the world, they would have been told that *Charlie Hebdo* was a racist, immigrant-goading rag, a French *Der Stürmer* that exists to bait ethnic and religious minorities.

I won't dwell on the deep wrong-headedness of this evaluation (the argument has already been well made in *Solidarity*) other than to note how wilfully ignorant this film makes it seem.

Daniel Leconte first made a film about *CH* in 2007, after an unsuccessful attempt by a number of Islamic organisations to sue the newspaper under religious hatred laws. The case against *CH* failed, the court ruled that what was being ridiculed was religious total-

itarianism and political Islam, rather than Muslims as people. That film was called *It's hard being liked by jerks*, referencing a *CH* cartoon depicting a humane Mohammed embarrassed and annoyed by those who, during the Danish cartoon affair, were killing in his name.

Some of the interviews from this earlier film are also used here. They feature the thoughtful staff of a small, struggling paper, defending the intent of their cartoons and co-gently articulating why they feel it's important that the right to blaspheme and mock religion be maintained. Their politics are left-wing, libertarian and marked by a prickly anti-clericalism.

The ugly Anglophone caricature of the *Charlie Hebdo* artists as either squalid racists or cheap shock-jocks seeking to sell copy evaporates on contact with reality. In particular, Stéphane Charbonnier ("Charb") comes across as deeply sincere about what he is doing. He, along with most of the others, is now dead.

The film shows how many of the survivors are still traumatised by what they have seen and haunted by the loss of their friends and comrades. The most wrenching part of the film is probably an interview with Corinne Rey (the cartoonist known as "Coco") who let the attackers into the newspaper's office at

gun point.

I had political reservations with the way the film dealt with the aftermath of the attacks. The scenes of a mass outpouring of support are genuinely moving. However, the film tends to present the reaction to the attacks as a popular republican front in which the French state and the whole society join arms for liberty. Indeed, at one point Philippe Val — probably among the most politically incoherent of *CH's* former editors — makes a daft point about how the French state no longer persecutes its dissenters, but defends them.

"Really?" I thought. The French state that bans demonstrations? That has imposed a months-long state of emergency which suspends key civil liberties?

Can we really be comfortable with a common front with would-be tough guys like Prime Minister Manuel Valls, who is so keen on freedom that he introduces legislation to make citizens of dual nationality uniquely

vulnerable to having their French citizenship revoked, and who calls for the left to embrace immigration quotas? And do we trust a French establishment that invites the murderous, censoring dictators of the Middle East to attend the same demonstrations that are supposed to honour freedom of speech?

I thought about this, then it occurred to me there was a reason why I knew about all these things and why I could spot all these hypocrisies. It was because I had read about them in *Charlie Hebdo*. The film is less politically sharp than the publication it is celebrating!

Many important issues are not in the film. But by its own admission, the intent of the film is to refocus attention on those who died, on their humour, on their warmth and on their conviction that freedom must include the right to criticise and consequently to be awkward and to offend.

A sad film, but an inspiring one.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Jean Lane reviews *A Raisin in the Sun*

***A Raisin in the Sun* was written in 1959 by Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), the first black woman to have a play performed on Broadway and the inspiration behind Nina Simone's 'Young Gifted and Black'.**

The play is set in an overcrowded Chicago slum apartment just before the emergence of the civil rights movement. The Youngers, a working class family comprising of grandmother Nena (Mama), her son Walter with his wife Ruth and child Travis, and Walter's sister, Beneatha, are about to come into an insurance pay-out of \$10,000, after the death of Nina's husband. The potential opportunities that come with it, cause tension.

Walter wants to use the money to realise his dream of self-advancement by investing, along with his old street friends, in a liquor store business. His sister, Beneatha, is studying to become a doctor. She is experimenting with radical ideas new to her family such as atheism. She berates one boyfriend for his assimilation into white culture and is being drawn by another, a Nigerian medical student, into the ideas of black nationalism and anti-colonial independence.

Arguments over the money and the cramped conditions of the Youngers' lives are exacerbated when Ruth discovers that she is two months pregnant. Her relationship with Walter reaches breaking point when Lena refuses to fund the liquor store idea. Instead, Lena puts a deposit down on a larger house in a solidly white neighbourhood.

Eventually Lena relents and gives the rest of the money to Walter to use as he sees fit, with the proviso that he keeps back enough of it to pay for his sister's education.

A representative of the white neighbourhood, Karl Linder, turns up with the message that they would far rather the Youngers did not move in as they would not fit in, and offers to buy the house from them. With righteous indignation from the family, Linder is sent packing by a Walter now imbued with a sense of confidence, as a young up and com-

ing business man. However, Walter's friend, Willy, runs off with all the money including that for Beneatha's education.

Walter's chance to prove himself a man deserving of respect again seems far away. To the horror of the three women in his life, he contemplates taking the money from the white man who says that they are not good enough to be his neighbours.

The dashing of the family's dreams of a better life are reflected in Beneatha's loss of confidence in an independent future for black people. She asserts that nationalism is a lost cause which can only lead to the swapping of white masters for black.

Walter finally proves himself to be a man in Lena's eyes by telling the white man where to go with his money and the family prepare to move into their new home. The play ends leaving the audience aware that many of their troubles as a black family in 1950s America have only just begun.

The title for the play is taken from a poem by Langston Hughes:

*What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?*

*Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.*

Or does it explode?

All the emotions expressed in the poem are there in the play, in this production, directed by Dawn Walton, and electrically so. All the political ideas of identity, racism, gender roles and social consciousness are brought refreshingly within the sphere of working-class life.

• The play is on tour around Britain ending in Coventry on 28 March.



One year on from the murder of eleven of its staff, *Charlie Hebdo* released an anniversary edition. The caption to the cartoon reads: "one year on, the assassin is still out there".

Sloppy and cartoonish bloodletting

Sacha Ismail reviews *The Hateful Eight*

I am not a fan of cinematic bloodbaths, but I went to see *The Hateful Eight*, Quentin Tarantino's latest film and a bloodbath if ever there was one, because its plot and characters are tied up with the bloodiest conflict in American history — the Civil War.

Tarantino's last film, *Django Unchained*, was about a freed slave taking revenge on slave-owners in the Deep South just before the war. This one is set in the newly settled West some years afterwards. Is Tarantino, who defended the extreme violence of *Django Unchained* on the reasonable basis that the reality of slavery was worse, and described the film as a deliberate assault on whitewashings of the Southern slavocracy, working up to make a film about the Civil War itself? That would be interesting.

In *The Hateful Eight*, Samuel L Jackson plays former slave and Civil War veteran Major Marquis Warren, now a bounty hunter, who ends up snowed in in a rural cabin with various other hard-bitten and violent men, all of them white, most of them racist and two of them Confederate veterans. The violence that ensues is not directly about race, but race plays a part in how it unfolds.

Jackson brings malevolent but admirable swagger to the proceedings. There is no painting up his character or record — he is as nasty as the rest of them, probably guilty of war crimes, and definitely guilty of genocide

against Native Americans — but I sympathised with him nonetheless.

I enjoyed the extensive Civil War references and other aspects of the film, including some sharp Tarantino dialogue and high-tension set-piece confrontations. But in the end it is sloppy. Copious use of "nigger", and copious sexism against the only female main character, are no doubt realistic, but there is way too much — in addition to what you might say about this politically, it is sort of lazy as well as a bit sad. At over three hours, the thing is far too long. In the end, the plot unravels and is substituted by ridiculous over the top violence.

I know Tarantino's fans like this sort of thing, but I wasn't impressed. I discussed this with a comrade and she suggested a contrast with the film *Drive*, which is mostly very calm but features some shocking violence — but that's the point, it's shocking. Here the cartoonish bloodletting just desensitises you. It compares unfavourably with Tarantino's own *Pulp Fiction*, in which bouts of violence punctuate a carefully constructed plot structure, or *Jackie Brown*. (I haven't seen some of Tarantino's more recent films and I can't really remember *Reservoir Dogs*, which I think is similar to *The Hateful Eight*, but less ridiculous).

Nothing much the characters do in this film is admirable. Still, a black lead who is only where he is because of the transformation brought by the US Civil War — that's good.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth 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 must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants 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 trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political 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 equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.

- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- 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!



Events

Saturday 13 February

LGSMigrants solidarity fundraiser
7.15pm, The Star of Kings, London, N1 0AX
bit.ly/LGSMigrants

Tuesday 16 February

Sheffield Workers' Liberty: How Labour Councils Can Fight Back: Lessons from Poplar
7.30pm, Central United Reform Church, Sheffield, S1 2JB
bit.ly/councilcuts

Thursday 18 February

Workers' Liberty London Forum: How to save the NHS
7pm, Indian YMCA, London, W1T 6AQ
bit.ly/NHSLDNforum

Monday 22 February

Barnet Momentum public meeting with John McDonnell MP
7pm, Middlesex University, London, NW4 4BT
bit.ly/stoptrident

Saturday 27 February

Stop Trident National Demonstration
12 noon, Marble Arch, London
bit.ly/stoptrident

Saturday 6 March

Stop Turkey's war on the Kurds! Break the silence! National demonstration
1pm, Trafalgar Square, London
bit.ly/kurdishdemo

Got an event you want listing? Email solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Momentum's national meeting

LABOUR

By Ed Whitby, North East and Cumbria delegate (pc)

Just the fact of Momentum holding its first democratic national representative meeting (on 6 February) was a success.

The procedure could certainly have been improved — there was not enough time for local groups to prepare properly for the regional meetings, indeed some regions didn't meet at all. For both the regional meetings and the national meeting, many documents were either not presented until the day or circulated at very short notice. Nevertheless in many groups and regions there was a lively process of electing delegates and discussing issues.

A summary of what was decided by the national committee:

- The statement of aims was amended to refer more to socialism and the working class. It is still, in my view, far from adequate, but it was agreed as an interim statement to be reviewed.

- Momentum is oriented towards organising within Labour, as well as broader campaigning.

- Momentum will become a membership organisation. It will encourage its members to join Labour, but anyone who wants to support Labour and is not a member of a party organisationally opposed to it can join, be a representative, officer, etc.

- Momentum will work with others on the left, who are free to distribute their literature at Momentum public meetings, etc.

- In addition to local groups and regions, there will also be the possibility of specific Momentum campaigning organisations: the document specifically mentioned Momentum NHS.

- We agreed to set up an interim Student and Youth Committee made up of student and youth members of the National Committee and nominations of student and young members from regions.

- It was reported that some regions were already organising policy conferences, but the proposal for holding regional and national policy conferences was remitted to the Steering Committee for further discussion

The NC meeting was attended by 53 delegates (26 from the regional meetings, 8 equalities reps, 11 from various Labour left groups and 8 from trade unions — Unite, TSSA, CWU, Bakers, ASLEF and FBU). About eight delegates were members of left organisations not formally represented, including two from Workers' Liberty. Copies of *Solidarity*, *Socialist Appeal* and *Labour Briefing* were sold at the meeting; a welcome exchange of left-wing ideas. There were people active in a number of unions not formally represented, e.g. NUT and PCS, and in campaigning organisations including the People's Assembly and the National Campaign



Against Fees and Cuts.

The NC will meet at least quarterly. It also elected a Steering Committee to meet more regularly and guide the organisation. The eight representatives from England elected to this committee are: Jill Mountford (London), Michael Chessum (London), Marsha Jane Thompson (Eastern), Jon Lansman (Left Futures), Sam Wheeler (North west), Jackie Walker (LRC), Christine Shawcroft (Labour Briefing Coop) and Cecile Wright (Black and Minority Ethnic). They will be joined by four trade union representatives, one rep from Scotland and one from Wales.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership debate was a big debate at the national committee. The three options were:

a. Only Labour Party members can join or even take part in organising / planning meetings as supporters; though local groups can continue to organise joint meetings with other organisations which can be open to non-Labour members.

b. Membership open only to Labour members, but people can be supporters and participate in local groups, voting only on local issues not connected to Labour — as long as they do not support parties against Labour. Only members can stand for office.

c. Membership and supporter status open to any person who supports Labour and doesn't support other parties which oppose Labour. All members can take part in all decisions, stand for all positions, etc.

The first position received two votes, the second 18 votes and the third 27. I think that was the right decision. People should join the Labour Party, and it is right that Momentum will strongly encourage this; but there are still many people coming to the organisation who for whatever reason haven't joined yet. We need to encourage and persuade them, not throw up an unnecessary barrier.

It also positive that the NC voted, by an overwhelming margin, to allow other organisations to distribute their literature at public meetings and so on. It is right that those who support other parties against Labour cannot join; but that is no reason to create a culture which discourages debate and free exchange of ideas.

There was discussion, and some criticism, about how equality reps (and also the student/youth reps) had been selected. There seemed to

be general agreement that there should be broad, democratic equalities/liberation networks established who should allow open nominations and to elect delegates to future National Committees as happened with regions.

Michael Chessum proposed a document to create a democratic Momentum Youth and Students organisation. There was wide support for this but it was referred back to the Steering Committee.

The meeting voted by a clear margin not to organise in Northern Ireland. I think this was wrong. The document said that this was in line with, and for the same reasons as, the Labour Party not doing so. But that is factually wrong: the Labour Party does organise in Northern Ireland, it just doesn't stand candidates. Moreover, the document didn't spell out what the Labour Party's reasons are: I would say that they are generally conservative reasons about not upsetting the "normal" operation of sectarian politics. It was argued that people in a British organisation shouldn't decide or comment on Northern Ireland: surely it dictates to tell them they can't organise a Momentum group even if they want?

Very positively, Matt Wrack from the FBU moved proposals for unions to be able to affiliate to Momentum, including non-Labour affiliated unions if they sign up to Momentum aims.

In the discussion on the 16 April People's Assembly march, which Momentum is building for, Rida Vaquas from Red Labour argued that Momentum should seek to improve and make more radical the draft demands on a number of issues: build council housing; repeal all anti-union laws, legalise solidarity; demand free education and living grants for all students. This was agreed.

There was some discussion on the Centre Left Grass Roots Alliance slate for the NEC. Some criticisms were raised, but it was agreed to support it. There was also discussion on Trident and criticism of Corbyn's suggestion of building just the submarines. Comrades from Socialist Appeal made good contributions on scrapping Trident but defending the jobs and incomes of workers through conversion.

For all the problems, I think the National Committee was positive. Momentum now needs to get out on the streets campaigning on big issues in the class struggle, the NHS being one of the most obvious, supporting workers', anti-austerity, anti-racist and other struggles, and pushing for the Labour Party to do the same.

Also to develop a clear program of demands and initiatives to shake up and transform the Labour Party, involve more people, change and activate policy and crucially democratise the party.

• Abridged from: edsunionblog.wordpress.com

Strike to save libraries

By Peggy Carter

Library workers in Lambeth struck on Monday 8 February in an ongoing fight to stop the closure or privatisation of many of the borough's libraries.

Library workers in Greenwich and Bromley also struck on Monday 8 February

The strike in Lambeth was well supported across all ten of the borough's libraries, with all libraries shut and large picket lines. Activists from other local trade unions came down to show solidarity on the picket lines.

In the evening Lambeth council cabinet met to discuss and vote on the proposals for a third time (the final full-council decision is expected to be in April). Unison members and campaigners from Friends of the Library groups protested outside the meeting before storming the hall and disrupting the meeting by having a "read-in". Individual activists stood up and read aloud from a book,



Pickets outside Brixton library

each one being replaced by another when they were told to sit down.

Councillors were forced to move their meeting to a different location and called the police on campaigners. However the police were somewhat bemused to be confronted by furious library campaigners demanding that they arrest the councillors for the crime of stealing the

libraries!

Unison members and library campaign groups from Lambeth will today (9 February) march to Parliament from Waterloo library to join the national Stand up for libraries lobby of Parliament.

• Sign the petition: bit.ly/lambethlibraries

Tube station strikes called off

By Ollie Moore

The RMT union has settled its dispute with London Underground over "Fit for the Future", a radical restructure of the way Tube stations are staffed, calling off strikes planned for 6-8 February.

LU promised some concessions over issues including weekend working and short-notice shift changes, but some union reps and activists were frustrated by the union's strategy.

A union rep told *Solidarity*: "There's still a fight to be had over 'Fit for the Future'. Even with the concessions we've won, it's still a job cuts programme that will turn work/life balance upside down for many station staff."

"Settling the dispute without consulting members first was particularly disappointing. It means we now need to re-ballot to take any action on this issue in future."

Tube unions are also set to begin

conducting referenda of their members over LU's offer to settle a parallel dispute over pay and 24-hour running ("Night Tube"). RMT, Aslef, and TSSA are recommending acceptance. Unite remains opposed to the offer.

Rank-and-file socialist bulletin *Tubeworker* is also calling for a no

vote, arguing that the proposed pay settlement does not reflect increased living costs, and that a four-year deal will tie unions' hands while leaving management free to plan more cuts.

The RMT begins its referendum on 11 February.

Strike vote to defend Glen Hart

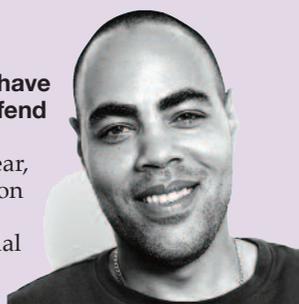
By Ollie Moore

RMT members on London Underground have voted by a 62% majority for strikes to defend victimised station supervisor Glen Hart.

Glen has been suspended for over a year, after being disciplined for his role in a union overtime ban in autumn 2014.

After being forced to drop the initial charges, LU brought a new disciplinary case for misconduct against Glen for allegedly being rude to a manager. The manager is the only witness to the alleged incident.

RMT is demanding that LU drops all disciplinary charges against Glen and returns him to work.



Track workers announce strikes

By Ollie Moore

London Underground track workers have announced an extensive programme of strikes in their dispute over safe working procedures.

Strikes will take place on 12-13 February, 6 March, 25-26 March, 27-28 March, 24 April, 15 May, and 12 June.

The RMT union says that LU's

current procedures put workers' lives in danger. A statement from the RMT's London Underground Engineering branch said:

"We firmly believe that there have been enough incidents and lack of certainty over the process that someone will be hurt or killed. There is no reason LUL cannot suspend the use of Section 15 [the regulation governing how the track is accessed for engineering works], which is a process they already

admit was flawed and rushed in too fast.

"The reality is a life of a track worker is not worth risking by a rushed implementation of a process that casualises track access to the level of the keystone cops.

"Therefore LUL have been informed that the strikes and action short will remain in place and that we will protect our members in all ways possible."

Unison left: where next?

By Simon Nelson

In the wake of the attacks of the Trade Union Bill and coming off the back of a General Secretary election mired in corruption and with a turnout of less than 10% as the largest public sector Union, Unison is not geared up for a fight.

The incumbent General Secretary, Dave Prentis's victory in December should highlight the level of stagnation that exists, and the failure of a serious challenge to the entrenched bureaucracy outside of election time. In the midst of an ongoing and now delayed investigation by the Electoral Reform Society and Unison itself, via Prentis supporter and Deputy General Secretary Roger McKenzie, the arrogance and sense of invulnerability of the bureaucracy is clear.

Whilst any challenge to the bureaucracy and the right of our union will include standing in elections and fighting for socialist and militant policy at conferences, to limit ourselves to the broad areas of agreement and compromises on conference floor and on the ballot paper will not be enough.

To fight the waves of cuts that will go through Council Budgets in the next month, the attacks on the NHS and in Higher Education, Unison branches need to be prepared to fight locally and do what they can to coordinate their struggles together. The unofficial action taken by Lambeth council workers show that there are fights where well organised groups of workers are prepared to take action. Serious and coordinated disputes against cuts, outsourcing and privatisation cannot just be left to individual branches and we have to mobilise the Union to use its position nationally to wage a real fight.

PAY

After several years of derisory pay offers and tokenistic one day strikes the Unison Special Conference in April 2015 demonstrated a serious level of anger amongst the membership over the sell out of the 2015 pay dispute.

Despite the conference deciding to re-initiate the pay campaign and bringing together activists from across the country in their anger at the capitulation of the Union to a terrible offer with one

day of action, the renewed campaign fizzled to nothing. Why?

The union called for further talks with the employer, who refused and left members who had now pushed for a further fight demobilised.

Successive years of top down organisation, the weakening of branches, and Unison's draconian rules that stop individual branches from speaking to each other, continue to undermine our chances of a real fight.

An agreement reached at the meeting in Birmingham on 13 January of people largely from the Burgess4GenSec campaign to meet again and continue to work together is a good start to some ongoing coordination of the left in Unison

We should build on the network of activists that took part in the campaign and continue to coordinate campaigns to democratise the Union and force it to fight together. Activists need to discuss how branches locally and govern disputes including any national action on pay.

DOCAS

The threat to DOCAS, the system of union dues being collected direct at source from wages, poses a major threat to all unions, but particularly Unison.

The retention rate of staff in the probation service, where Unison currently organises, and DOCAS has been removed, shows that around 20% of the membership are lost. Such a fall in membership will be very damaging to the union's ability to fight but also on its density and influence in the workplace.

Unison's pledge to fight the Trade Union Bill has highlighted its inability to proactively mobilise members to campaign. Branches hear reports that increasing numbers of full time officials have been sent to lobby the Lords and spend more time in the Head Office, writing briefings and holding meetings.

Such a strategy does little to inspire or engage members and abstract calls to campaign against the Bill have not resulted in branch-led campaigns to recruit and prepare to fight the bill when passed.

• Join the discussion: lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk

No academy at John Roan School!

By Gemma Short

Teachers at John Roan school in Greenwich will be balloting for strikes over the proposed academisation of their school.

Staff at the school have only just settled a dispute over lesson observations and workload after strikes in November last year. That cam-

paign has left them in a strong position to fight the proposed academisation, especially given parent and student support for the last dispute.

A petition against academisation has reached over 1000 signatures in less than a week.

• Sign the petition: bit.ly/johnroan



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DON'T CUT OUR SCHOOLS!

By Kate Harris

Schools across England are facing huge funding cuts over the next few years, under a "fairer" new funding formula, taking effect from 2017-18.

Nationally, schools will see about 8% cuts. In a few rare cases, particularly in schools in the shires, schools may have increased budgets. But schools in London will be hit with 13% cuts and some boroughs will face cuts of more than 20%.

The current system is unfair and schools are under-funded. In Lincolnshire, for example, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has doubled but the amount of money schools receive has stayed roughly the same. The same is true in Dorset. According

to 2015-2016 figures, the amount of funding per pupil varies from roughly £4158 per pupil per year to £8587 per pupil per year.

13 years ago, London schools were some of the worst in the country, with poverty and under-funding, among other factors, creating a "perfect storm" of poor behaviour – even violence, poor results and poor teacher retention.

New Labour's London Challenge programme pumped money and resources into the capital's worst schools and – surprise, surprise – schools improved, behaviour improved and results improved.

For 20 years, the "f40 group", representing the interests of some of the lowest-funded schools in the country, has been campaigning for more parity in funding between

schools in different local authorities.

While the anger of staff, head-teachers, governors and parents over the under-funding of schools in areas such as Berkshire, Poole and Stockport, is thoroughly justified, revising the funding formula to "redistribute" funding from other areas will have devastating effects for schools in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Nottingham.

We are already in a national schools crisis, despite claims by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan, and the Department for Education, to the contrary. Despite the DfE not meeting its own teacher training targets for the fifth year in a row, they reported positively about how figures had risen. There aren't enough teachers training, and more and more teachers are



A protest against education cuts in the US. Similar cuts are expected here

Sheffield school to strike to stop cuts

By Alice Swarstarner

In Sheffield a number of schools and colleges are now facing compulsory redundancy situations.

Parents at High Storrs School, for example, have recently become aware that the staff hours and roles are being cut. A number of subjects such as GCSE PE may no longer be offered as a result of this. This has left teaching staff doubly hit, as administrative support has already been largely removed, leaving extra clerical work to be completed in addition to the already excessive teaching workload.

Furthermore, the reduction in teaching numbers may mean that class sizes increase to unworkable levels in most subjects. Early reports suggest that class sizes of almost thirty students have been considered at A-level, a time when one-to-one teaching is crucial. This is of immediate concern to all parents; the quality of teaching at the school is high, but it surely cannot be maintained under these conditions.

As a result of staff concerns, NUT members have been balloted on strike action in the school; the returns were overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action if management will not consider alternative solutions to their financial

issues. It is understood that the NASUWT is also soon to hold an indicative ballot of members.

NUT members have repeatedly shown their belief in strikes, in the face of a savagely hostile administration and a union leadership more concerned with appeasing potential Blairite future governments than winning industrial battles in the here and now. This story is only one of many across the region and the country; it's not a victory yet, but it's proof that the rank and file membership is strong and determined.

We can only hope that the union leadership finally learns from them.

leaving.

Research shows that 40% of Newly Qualified Teachers left the profession after just one year of teaching. 60% of teachers in some boroughs are considering leaving their school, and 15% of classes in London schools are taught by workers and educators who aren't qualified teachers and whom schools pay less.

Workload of teachers is around 55-60 hours a week, according to NUT surveys, but a good few teachers work 12-16 hour days just to stay afloat. On top of this, new testing regimes at both primary and secondary phases are pushing teachers to the limit of our tolerance; and the pay and conditions set out in the National Agreement or "Burgundy Book" are constantly broken, not to mention that academy schools are not automatically bound by them.

Five years of austerity, cuts to youth services, including mental health provision for under-18s and overcrowding due to a lack of

council housing stock, added to cuts to schools particularly in London, are set to create another "perfect storm" of horrendous conditions for students, parents and school workers. Schools will lay off vital members of staff in order to meet the shortfall in funding, causing even bigger problems.

At NUT annual conference in April 2015 the union leadership presented, and conference unanimously voted for, a motion which committed the union to organise a public campaign about school funding similar to the FACE (fighting against cuts in education) campaign of the mid-90s. However almost a year later there is no sign of any such campaign.

We need to set up campaigns in our towns/cities and boroughs involving teachers, parents and students, with public meetings, marches, petitions, lobbies of MPs and direct action to stop the government's plans and instead call for school funding increases across England.

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