



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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TORY FALL-OUT SHOWS WE CAN BEAT CUTS

On 18 March Iain Duncan Smith resigned as Work and Pensions minister — in protest, so he claimed, at a planned £4.4 billion cut to disability benefits.

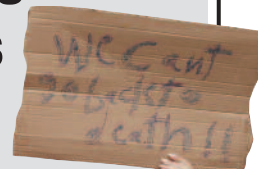
Whatever Duncan Smith's motives — it looks like he resigned primarily to campaign along with other Tory right-wingers for EU exit free from Cabinet constraints — the resignation makes the whole Tory cuts drive much more vulnerable.

The Labour Party and the unions should respond with a counter-drive to restore benefits and services, taxing the rich to whatever level necessary.

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Dora Polenta looks at what is happening under the banner of "Fortress Europe".

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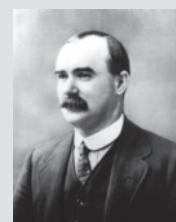
Tories' war on our schools



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Obama and the Platismo dissidents

By Sam Farber*

Barack Obama's arrival in Cuba will mark the first visit by a United States president to the island since Calvin Coolidge went in 1928.

His trip follows the reopening of diplomatic relations with Cuba on 17 December 2014 and various other steps taken to normalise relations — a welcome change after decades of hostility that include an ongoing economic blockade, sponsored invasions, and terrorist attacks.

So far, everything seems to indicate a warm reception for Obama from most Cubans. But he is likely to be received with reservations, if not outright hostility, by pro-US right-wing dissidents on the island.

The politics of this right wing — both on the island and abroad — that has long carried the favour of Washington elites is rooted in a perspective called “Platismo.” The origin of the term goes back to 1901, when the first constituent assembly of the island was forced to accept an amendment to the Cuban constitution authored by US senator Orville Platt giving the United States the legal right to intervene in the country's internal affairs.

For the next thirty-three years, the United States, with the explicit support of many Cuban Platista politicians, availed itself of this license repeatedly, influencing policy under the threat of military occupation — a threat it carried out on several occasions.

In today's Cuba, self-described dissidents are organised in small, nonviolent groups and individually they range from the hard right to moderate Christian Democrats

* Abridged from Jacobin magazine. Full article: bit.ly/1RwXdMi



Not everyone in Cuba has welcomed Obama's visit

and social democrats on the left. A new left, critical current has also emerged, whose proponents do not call themselves dissidents, in part because of their fear of being associated with Miami and Washington.

Right-wing dissidents oppose the restoration of diplomatic relations with the United States and want the economic blockade to continue, while many dissidents to their left support the resumption of normal relations, though this support is often conditioned on the Cuban government granting political and economic concessions in return.

Most of these liberal dissidents do not oppose the blockade on principle (whether national self-determination or anti-imperialism), but because they see its effects to be counterproductive, or consider the whole strategy a failure. That is why these liberal and social-democratic dissidents have been likely to slide into Platismo, although generally of a milder variety than their

right-wing counterparts. They see the US as a source of support that they can use and discard at their convenience and on their own terms.

Since the revolution, the United States has tried to channel Cuban Platismo into a variety of organizations, and in diverse ways. The anti-Castro terrorist organizations that accepted arms and funding from the US government did so on at least implicitly Platista grounds. Overt, public efforts to oppose the Cuban government have also been cast in the mould of Platismo.

US government agencies have also sought to establish secret ties with elements of the Cuban opposition.

Most serious of all, of course, is the secret financing that the US government has provided to an undetermined number of Cuban opposition forces.

SURVIVE

Those receiving such subsidies defend themselves by pointing to the undeniable fact that it is difficult to survive as an oppositionist in a country like Cuba.

Besides extensive surveillance and outright repression, the government manages access to higher education, and, until recently, virtually all sources of employment.

It is not surprising that the Cuban government has seized the issue of both real and imagined American government aid to the dissidents as a favourite battering ram against the opposition. But faithful to its history, the Cuban government has responded to the challenge of a peaceful, nonviolent dissidence with police and administrative repression.

Financial aid from the US government, and from formally non-governmental organisations

financed by the state, such as Freedom House, has not only compromised the independence of opposition groups in Cuba, but has also likely diverted those groups away from organising other Cubans and instead promoted practices such as making statements to the foreign press and expecting their monthly checks from the US.

An organizing approach aiming at self-sufficiency, even under the difficult circumstances that prevail in the island, would give the dissidence a political independence and strength that they could not attain being reliant on foreign governments for their political and material survival.

Cuban dissidents influenced by Platismo have argued that, in Cuba, the issue of national self-determination — or for that matter, the risk that their dependence on foreign government support poses to their own independence — is moot. Without democracy in Cuba, they argue, there is no possibility of national self-determination, and any objection to US government aid translates into an obstruction to the struggle for democracy in the island.

This is an obvious obfuscation of the issues at stake: historically, claims for the right to national self-determination have never been premised on internal democracy...

The struggle against the structures of the one-party state and for the political and economic democratisation of Cuban society is endangered by dissidents who have embraced Platismo. It is, after all, an ideology that can only weaken Cuba's political sovereignty and threatens to return the island to a pre-revolutionary neocolonial status — a condition that was transcended even if at the unnecessary price of the establishment of a one-

party state.

The commitment of many Platistas to the democracy they ostensibly defend has become even more questionable by their silence about or outright support for the US-backed coup attempted in Venezuela in 2002, and the one successfully executed in Honduras in 2009. In addition, the open Platismo of many dissidents has strategically harmed the anti-Castro cause by allowing the Cuban government to effectively portray its critics as servants of the United States to both national and international audiences.

Individuals and organisations persecuted by the Cuban government for peaceful political activity should be defended, even Platistas and those who advocate the restoration of the “free-market economy.”

RIGHTS

The defence of democratic rights and civil liberties inside a system that rejects them is an obligation beyond fundamental political disagreements.

That is an altogether different issue from supporting Platistas politically.

President Obama's visit is a step in the right direction of normalising US relations with Cuba. That is why he deserves to be welcomed with a recognition of his efforts to correct some of the wrongs of the US's past foreign policies towards Cuba. But this recognition should not be confused with an undignified gratitude and even less with efforts to have him use the powers of the imperialist state over which he presides to press for the democratization of Cuba.

That is a task for the Cuban people themselves, not Washington.

Why UCL students are on rent strike

Kasandra Tomaszewska, a first-year University College London (UCL) history student, rent-striker, and activist with the UCL Cut the Rent Campaign, spoke to Solidarity.

I got involved in the rent strike very randomly and late in the process. My roommate gave me some leaflets. I didn't get very involved but thought “it is actually a very good idea, and if it starts I will join”.

Then the rent strike started and I joined. After a week or so I took part in an interview, then another one, because they needed people to speak to the public and I was willing to do it. I got in touch with organisers and people who were involved for much longer; it snow-

balled a bit and I got really involved after some time. I thought it was really nice and started to be fun for me.

Paradoxically the rent strike is happening in the cheapest accommodation on UCL campus (£102.97-£235.90 per week at UCL). And I wouldn't mind paying so much if the quality was better. Most of the rent strikers got involved in because of quality.

But after being involved my approach changed; I understood that it is unfair that student accommodation is unaffordable for the majority of students.

Over time I started to understand the different situations of students. For example, some students have minimum maintenance loans and can simply not afford it without part-time jobs. Or there are also students like me who are from overseas and need to work a

lot to afford this accommodation. Or there are students who believe it is unfair that it is so expensive.

I started in a bit of a different position from most rent strikers because I am from another country and had no idea how bad the situation was in London. I expected it to be bad but not so bad. So in the first several months I had no idea how UCL compares to the wider London situation.

Then I started talking to people and meeting people outside the university who were telling me it is actually very expensive. So I think our action will not start a big uprising and a big revolution immediately but it is an important step, showing something is wrong. Some of us took part in the March Against the Housing Bill in London, so I think the wider cooperation has already started. I have hope that our action can change

something.

The campaign convinced me that I can take action. To be honest, I was rather a modest person and the campaign gave me the power to take action. Second, it made me more aware of what is actually going on with housing in London. As an international student you need a lot of time to understand the situation fully. I think housing is very important for many people. If I became a part of this action, I would really like to continue.

Rising tuition fees, cutting maintenance loans, cutting bursaries, rising rents, it is all part of the same picture. All of these policies from the government and management is not good for students. It is not good for the safety and stability of students.

When I had to look for a job it was hard because part-time jobs for students are hard to find, and

then they are especially low paid and unstable compared to other jobs. If I need to spend time looking for a job and then working at this job, I cannot put enough effort into my study. If I cannot secure housing or I cannot secure my rent, I am stressed and can't perform well in school. Recently, UCL removed housing and financial problems from its list of allowed extenuating circumstances for deadline extensions for coursework. It really seems like the university doesn't care at all.

I don't believe in the university propaganda that straight after graduating we will have well paid jobs and everything will be okay.

I think it will be a struggle. I don't want to go back to my country (Poland). I would like to stay in London but if it is better for me to move somewhere else then I will. It will be a shame.

A Europe of borders and resistance

By Theodora Polenta

Here's what the "Fortress EU" of ever increasing land, air and sea fences and more actual and conceptual borders says to us all, and not only to the refugees of Syria's war:

There is no place for you to live, because I want to grab your resources and check your routes.

There is no other place for you to go to breathe.

There is no way to walk.

The only option to endure, to endure, to adapt, to live with the annihilation of any planning for a better future.

And, to a large extent, those messages represent the broader social, economic, and cultural values of today's capitalism.

If Europe greeted all the refugees from the Syrian war, that would be less than one per cent of the EU population. And the EU is the richest economic "pole" in the world, its total GDP exceeding the USA's.

But the European "partners" want to isolate the "problem" in Greece and Turkey. They want to buy the cooperation of Turkey with payouts, €3 and then €6 billion. The Turkish government asks also for a speeding-up of the process of integration of Turkey into the EU. The EU nods agreement, but makes no demand even for Turkey to create humane living conditions for refugees.

The EU's decision to close the Greek-Macedonian border and seal the routes through the Balkans and the Mediterranean has, with the criminal consent of Alexis Tsipras and the other pro-Memorandum mainstream party leaders in Greece, achieved the "impossible".

In blatant contradiction with international law, it has transformed the refugee issue from a European and global one into a bilateral issue between Greece and Turkey.



26 organisations from Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia which have been helping refugees, have condemned the European governments for acting "in violation of the national, European and international law, closing their doors to people who are entitled to international protection. The daily limits on the number of people being accepted are in accordance with the European Commission clearly incompatible with the Geneva Convention on Refugees. We are concerned that will result in collective expulsion, which violates the European Convention on Human Rights".

RETURN

Yet the EU's new policy prescribes the return of all new "irregular migrants" who travel from Turkey to the Greek islands.

All costs will be covered by the EU. Then, it says, for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian be resettled from Turkey in the EU.

Greece has undertaken to set up in the Aegean islands, within a few

days, a huge mechanism (some 4,000 employees) to record one by one the immigrants coming from Turkey and arrange for their transfer.

The scheme for Turkey to send to Europe a Syrian from its own refugee camps for each Syrian received from Greece is contrary to the UN Convention on Refugees and of doubtful practicability, since it is limited to the arbitrary number of 72,000 refugees and relies on the European Commission and the EU member states. Several countries, led by Hungary, have said that they will not cooperate with it.

Greece's Syriza-Anel government has already adopted the basic position of the Greece's old conservative ruling party, the ND, that of creating detention centres and mass deportations for the "irregular migrants". And the EU aid? Greece will get €368 million in three years, when this year alone it has spent on the refugee crisis €600 million according to the governor of the Bank of Greece, over €1 billion according to its deputy minister for migration policy.

Before the war, Syria, a country of 185,000 square kilometers, had 23 million inhabitants. Of those, 6.6 million are now refugees within the country, and 4.6 million outside Syria. 2.6 million are in Turkey and one million in Lebanon. These millions are the source of refugee flow to Europe.

In the 1940s there was "no space" for the Jews. Now there is "no space" for the refugees. In the nationalist and racist imaginary, the culprit, the problem, is always the other, the different, the foreign. So a European Union with a population of over 500 million people "cannot accommodate" a few million refugees.

NATO's decision, at the request of Greece, Turkey and Germany, to "assist" with naval forces in the Aegean also means in a radical shift in the treatment of refugees. It is about establishing a marine "military fence", with the same function and the same purpose as a land fence.

WAR

For as long as the war in Syria lasts and chaos prevails refugees will have no choice. They will try by every means possible to get to a place that is safer.

However many summits the governments call, however many fences and borders they erect, however many NATO warships are deployed, whatever the weather conditions, no force will stop the movement of desperate people. This is the global history of migration and mass population movement

The forces of xenophobia and neo-nazism are on the rise. More recently with 8% and 14 seats The neo-Nazi People's Party in Slovakia won 8% of the vote and 14 seats. In Germany, the right-wing Eurosceptic AfD got a much increased vote in elections on 13 March.

Hungary's right-wing prime minister, Viktor Orban, rants: "We do not want to introduce crime, terrorism, homophobia and anti-Semitism into Hungary." In

"liberal" Denmark, the parliament has passed a law for the confiscation of all refugees' valuables exceeding €1340.

On the other hand, we have had a rise of the left in the elections in Ireland and significant processes on the left in a number of countries of southern Europe and the UK and US. We also had anti-fascist demonstrations in many European countries and the huge wave of solidarity for refugees in Greece.

The root of it all is the crisis of the capitalist system as a whole and internationally, which is reflected in the EU and its institutions. Entire regions of the world are plummeting to barbarism. The problem is the system which leads inexorably to poverty and misery, and as Lenin described it, for poor people, a "nightmare without end."

We need another left, ready for a total break with the system. A left which will not regress to the dystopian nation-centred slogan of more borders and EU exit; a left that will raise the flag of the common struggle with workers in the rest of Europe, on the basis of internationalism, a socialist Europe and a socialist world.

In juxtaposition with the prospect of continuing misery, there is of course the great solidarity movement — the movement that concretely and practically understands that no matter how many fences they raise, no matter how many detention camps they build, no matter how many borders and passages they will militarise and close, the passion for human life, freedom and dignity cannot be stopped.

Let us not forget: The vines were made long before the borders that were created to separate them. The land, water, wheat, rice, and the common life, pre-existed the fences, the small private properties, and the state borders.

The united front and merging of the masses and flows of refugees and immigrants with the working class movement will relegate the "man-made" borders, of every kind and every scale, to the museum of history.

Fight job and wage cuts at Manchester Uni

By Free Education Manchester

Forty-three job cuts have been announced at UMC Limited, the subsidiary wholly owned by the University of Manchester which provides all the catering and food on campus.

This company is an outsourcing venture used by the University to employ catering staff on zero-hours contracts, free of any of the protections of in-house employment.

The University raked in a cool £46 million in profit last year, yet now 60 out of UMC's 283 staff have been informed that their jobs are at risk. As we saw last term in IT, management are trying to force these cuts through under the guise

of "voluntary" severance packages — but if they are not all taken, redundancies will become compulsory. For those still working at UMC after this round of cuts, they have announced new contracts with cuts to salaries by up to a third.

This comes from an institution where senior management earn six figure salaries. Dame Nancy Rothwell was able to claim £35,000 in non-salaried expenses alone last year. The number of staff earning over £100,000 increased from 81 in 2013 to 204 in 2015.

After gloating on StaffNet about finally agreeing to a Living Wage last month (the product of years of campaigning by staff and students), the University seems to want to keep this news quiet.

That will not happen. We stand

with the staff who are subject to the injustices which are coming ever quicker with the progress of privatisation and profit-making in education. We will be organising solidarity action in response, and supporting workers in any industrial action they take.

These latest announcements only confirm the trajectory of our university in the marketised fee regime. Whilst they rake in money from exploiting students through fees, and saving money through condemning their workers to lives of in-work poverty, management's wages, contempt and desire to build flashy, cold, commodified buildings only seems to grow.

We can fight this decision through collective action and solidarity with staff. And we will win.

How to tackle “left anti-semitism”

By Michael Elms

A series of incidents in the Labour Party and in the student left over the last few months have highlighted the issue of “left-wing anti-semitism”.

In January, the liberal-Zionist group Yachad, which campaigns for a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine based on the 1967 borders, and an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, organised an event with the liberal Zionist Ami Ayalon at King’s College London. This meeting was disrupted by members of the KCL Action Palestine group, with fire alarms being set off and a crowd hammering on the doors and windows of the venue.

In February, a member of the Oxford University Labour Club’s committee, Alex Chalmers, resigned, alleging that left-wingers in the club would deride Jewish students with whom they disagreed as “Zios” (a term used by far-right anti-semites) and sing a song about rocket attacks on Tel Aviv (“Rockets over Tel Aviv”, to the tune of Bread of Heaven). He also said Jewish students deemed to be pro-Israeli would be barracked and heckled in meetings.

The left-wing candidate for Young Labour’s position on the Party’s National Executive Committee, James Elliott, also a member of OULC, was mentioned by Chalmers as having written an article defending the Palestine Society at Oxford against charges of anti-Jewish racism, in which he said, “Anti-Semitism is a tired old accusation from Zionists, retreating behind mendacious slurs when losing the arguments”. We know that the allegations about the song and the article are true. The other allegations are plausible.

A few weeks later, during the LSE Student Union elections, the left-wing candidate for General Secretary Rayhan Uddin was beaten by Re-Open Nominations after a scandal over a message he sent, claiming that “leading Zionists around the country... want to win back LSE and make it right wing and Zio again.”

These events come alongside a furore caused by the anti-semitic remarks of a number of Labour Party members. Vicky Kirby, a member of Woking Labour Party’s Executive Committee, who had been removed as a Labour parliamentary candidate in 2014 because of online antisemitic comments, has been suspended. A Labour Party left-winger, Gerry Downing, was invited onto the Daily

Politics to expound his cranky conspiracy theories about the influence of Jewish millionaires in American politics. He was brought to the studio to voice those theories, and happily obliged.

As Workers’ Liberty has long argued, left-wing anti-semitism is nothing new. In the 19th century, the German socialist leader August Bebel was moved to remark that “Anti-semitism is the socialism of fools”. Many early anti-capitalist demagogues stole from conspiracies about Jewish financiers to win support for their political groups.

After the Second World War much of left-wing anti-semitism has been under the cover of agitation against “Zionism”. Stan Crooke has documented the origins of that modern leftwing anti-semitism, showing its roots in Stalinist “anti-Zionist” campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, campaigns of lies which were motivated by domestic and foreign policy of the Soviet bureaucracy (bit.ly/22CaapT).

NOT DENIED

The realities revealed by the recent scandals is ugly. The positive flipside is that the charges have not been denied or dismissed by the left.

Frequently, much of the left, especially the Socialist Workers’ Party and those in its political orbit (Counterfire, RS21, Stop the War, Unite Against Fascism), have claimed either that left anti-semitism is not very serious, or that it is the exclusive preserve of the far right, or that accusations of anti-semitism against the left come from “Zionists” who wish to silence their critics (as in Elliott’s article, quoted above). Alternatively that where anti-semitism is expressed by Arabs or Muslim-background people, it is “the violence of the oppressed”, an understandable reaction to Israel’s colonial war against the Palestinians.

Elliott has rightly apologised for writing the line quoted above. And Uddin has apologised for his use of the word “Zio”. Owen Jones has written an article in which he declares anti-semitism to be bad, and calls on Labour to change its rules so that “anyone found guilty of anti-semitism – or any other form of racism — is expelled from the party. Their readmission should only happen when they have demonstrably been shown to have been re-educated.”

But Jones’s proposed solution does not get to the bottom of this question. There is certainly a case for labour movement bodies to

expel determined and worked-out racists. But cases like Elliott’s and Uddin’s can not be usefully be dealt with by expulsions or by pious general statements about anti-semitism being unacceptable.

All the incidents of “left anti-semitism” are almost certainly not rooted in personal animosity to Jews. Rather they have a common political root in the commonly-held programme of much of the left for the Israel-Palestine conflict. Until the left’s political programme is picked apart and corrected, incidents like these will continue to occur. Labour Party expulsions would have little effect on left anti-semitism; they would explain nothing and educate no-one.

The left’s policy for the Israel-Palestine conflict is, in short, the one-state solution. The Stalinist parties did not call for the destruction of Israel, but they prepared the way by indicting tiny Israel as the world’s chief font of imperialism and racism. Widespread now is the idea that justice for the Palestinians can be secured, not by Israel ending its occupation and guaranteeing a viable Palestinian state through land transfers and reparations, and an end to racist and militarist laws and politics in Israel (as we in Workers’ Liberty advocate); but by Israel ceasing to exist.

The programme is linked to the idea that Israel is an illegitimate historical formation, with no right to exist and that therefore any manifestation of Israeli nationalism, including the simple wanting Israel to continue to exist of very many Jewish people (and others) is racist.

While is generally accepted on the socialist left that nationalisms are complex, and encompass shades of opinion, from liberal civic nationalism to fascism, the spectrum of Israeli nationalisms is treated differently. It is seen as a homogenous ideology, with all controversy and political diversity stripped out. Thus the Yachad meeting at KCL was to be received in exactly the same way as a Netanyahu rally. There’s no difference between Yachad and Netanyahu, they’re both Zionists.

The logic of treating all Zionists as all racist imperialists etc, necessarily puts all Jews under suspicion as most living Jews feel some connection with Israel — that is, most are “Zionists”. The individuals take the logic further, or don’t.

The same logic is at the heart of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Workers’ Liberty has no particular objection to targeted boycotts or campaigns

to divest from this or that company which is complicit in human rights abuses; and positively supports an end to military aid to Israel. But the BDS movement brings together each of these tactics into a campaign which is logically for the systematic exclusion of Israel (and only Israel) from international commercial and cultural life. All Israeli goods, performers and academics are to be shunned because they are Israeli and because Israel has no right to exist. The Hebrew-speaking Jews living in Israel have no right to self-determination (unlike any other national group in the world). Zionism is uniquely and uniformly racist.

Officially, the BDS movement has no position on one or two states in Israel-Palestine. But it’s underlying drives comes for a one-state perspective; it is not open about that because “two states” has long been more widely seen to be the basis for a democratic political settlement between Palestinians and Jews in Israel-Palestine (e.g. the policy was adopted by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in 1988).

COMPARISON

A comparison with Turkey’s relationship with the Kurds indicates the absurdity and implicit racism of these positions.

Rightly, left and workers’ movements around the world are united in outrage at the Turkish state’s treatment of the Kurds. There is widespread global support for Kurdish demands for autonomy or independence. But nobody argues the Turkish state should cease to exist. Or that those Turks who support the Kurds and oppose racism in Turkish society (of whom there are many) are racists unless they accept that Turkey should be dissolved.

No-one in Oxford University Labour Club, to our knowledge, has started singing jaunty songs about bombs killing civilians in Ankara or Istanbul.

Where UK media outlets or politicians give the Turkish state an easy ride, or overlook its racist war against the Kurds, this is generally not ascribed to shadowy “Turkish control” of the UK media, or to combinations of “Turkish-nationalist millionaires” forming powerful “Turkish lobbies”. A grounded and researched explanation usually suffices to explain UK collaboration with Turkey: self-interested co-operation between imperialist states.

There is no global movement to boycott Turkish goods because they are Turkish; there is no global campaign to shut down performances by Turkish artists because they are Turkish; there is no move to disbar academic collaboration with Turkish academics because they are Turkish. Moreover, were such a campaign of blanket hostility to all things Turkish proposed to a left-wing audience, it is hard to imagine it being greeted with anything other than outrage.

Workers’ Liberty rejects a theory of world politics based on “good peoples” and “bad peoples”. We reject conspiratorial explanations for world events. We believe that the answer to all colonial wars and national liberation struggles is to apply the democratic principle of self-determination for nations, to support oppressed nations in their struggle for self-determination and to apply the principle equally to all nations.

Until the rest of the left takes up an approach to the Israel-Palestine based on democracy, and abandons the formulas which are the inheritance of Stalinism, left-wing anti-semitism will continue to surface and re-surface, and no amount of hand-wringing or expulsions will change that.

Abstaining on “Snooper’s Charter” undermines Labour’s credibility

LETTER

On 14 March the Labour Party whipped MPs to abstain on the Investigatory Powers Bill, the “Snooper’s Charter”, that would give the government unprecedented powers to invade the privacy of ordinary citizens without warrant, regardless or not if they are accused of committing any crimes.

The Investigatory Powers Bill will require all internet service providers (ISPs) to store the browsing data of their clients for up to a year, will ban any service using end-to-end encryption, including SnapChat, WhatsApp and iMessage (much as many of us would remained dry eyed if SnapChat closes, it shouldn’t be at the expense of civil liberties) and forces ISPs to aid the secret service in hacking and bugging clients computers.

Abstaining on this bill, rather than vehement opposition, is a catastrophic miscalcu-

lation on the part of the Labour Party that will serve to undermine their role in opposing the attacks on ordinary people by the Cameron administration.

Firstly, this decision compromises the integrity of the labour movement. What is a labour movement if not protecting ordinary citizens from repressive state apparatus? Our lives are reflected online, our views, our hobbies, our activism, all for the government to view without warrant.

Secondly, this decision expresses the flaws of forcing consensus politics. In striving to appease a “middle ground” (which in this case simply did not exist, the vast majority of Labour members and MPs are opposed to this bill), debate and diversity in the party has been sacrificed in favour of an unwelcome uniform.

Thirdly, this decision reinforces the whip system, arguably the greatest affront to accountability within parliamentary parties. MPs should exist to serve their constituency,

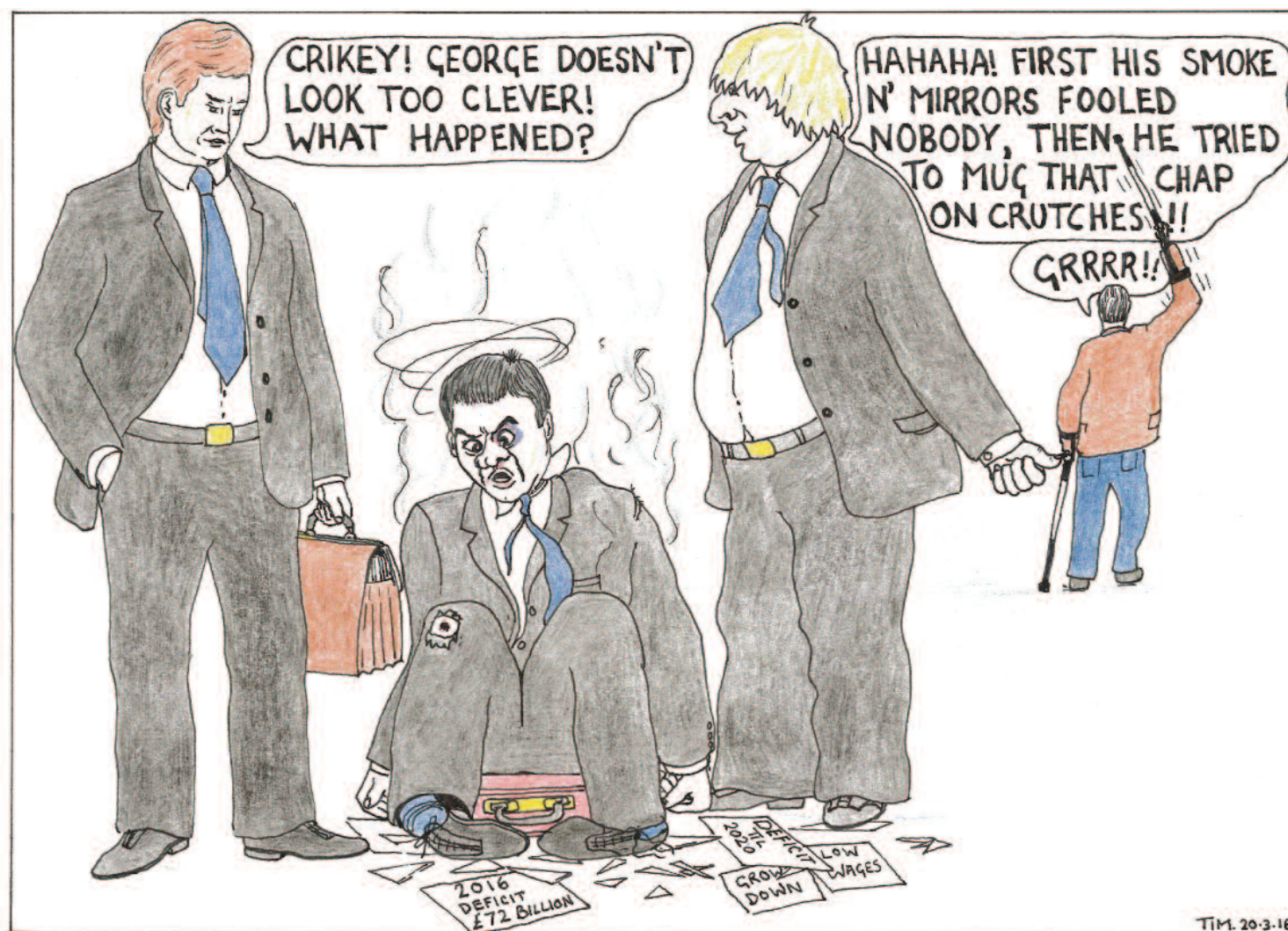
and be held accountable accordingly.. An unaccountable higher body effectively forcing MPs to make decisions completely against the interests of their constituency lest they compromise future platforms to effectively influence state policy is a mockery of representative democracy.

Finally, this sets a dangerous precedent for civil liberties within the present political status quo. The decision to abstain effectively tells the government the Labour Party are either not interested in defending, or too cowardly to defend, civil liberties.

Though this decision may have originated from Andy Burnham, not the main players of the Corbyn administration, but I struggle to have faith in a leadership that cannot challenge the reckless decisions of a single shadow minister, or are ideologically not concerned with such an ostentatious attack on civil liberties.

Sam C, Oxford

Tory fall-out shows we can beat cuts



On 18 March Iain Duncan Smith resigned as Work and Pensions minister — in protest, so he claimed, at a planned £4.4 billion cut to disability benefits.

The cut had been announced in the Budget on 16 March. The Tories had already been forced to put it on hold before Duncan Smith's resignation, but, he claimed, chancellor George Osborne still insisted that £4.4 billion must be cut from the benefits budget somehow.

Whatever Duncan Smith's motives — it looks like he resigned primarily to campaign along with other Tory right-wingers for EU exit free from Cabinet constraints — the resignation makes the whole Tory cuts drive much more vulnerable.

If even right-wing Tories condemn the cuts drive as unfair and driven by a political bias towards favouring the rich, then it can't be invincible. When the Tories' divisions over Europe are so sharp as to produce this open clash within their leadership, that weakens them on other issues.

The Labour Party and the unions should respond with a counter-drive to restore benefits and services, taxing the rich to whatever level necessary.

Duncan Smith himself had overseen drastic attacks on disabled people. Between December 2011 and February 2014, 2,380 people died after their Work Capability Assessment told them they should start looking for work. There were nearly 600 additional suicides of disabled people over the same period.

The Tories replaced the old Disability Living Allowance with a "Personal Independence Payment", which saw many disabled people lose money. They also introduced much tougher "fitness for work" tests, often administered by private firms like Atos and Capita, that forced more disabled people to search for work or risk losing their benefits.

Many of those who have appealed against removal of benefits have won their appeals. Between December 2014 and June 2015, 53% of those who appealed against an Employment and Support Allowance "fit to work" decision had it reversed. But that is only after losing their benefits and having to go through the appeals process.

The Tories' aim is not to bring economic recovery, but to make workers, the poor, and the disabled pay for the costs of the 2008 crash, and thus clear the ground for future profits to rise on the basis of a shifted balance of class power.

That disability benefit cuts have been the ones which have cracked the Tories open is a tribute to the stubborn campaigning of disabled people's groups, most radically and effectively Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC). It has also made difference that Labour, under Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, is now firmly opposed to cuts rather than merely arguing, as Ed Miliband did, that cuts should be made more slowly.

The TUC Disabled Workers' Committee has recently published a Manifesto for Disability Equality, setting out a number of demands, including: properly funded support for independent living; effective employment rights and decent pay and working conditions for carers; reinstate the Disabled Students Allowance; scrap the current system for determining access to benefits.

And the next step for labour movement activists all across the country should be to make the 16 April march against austerity (1pm from Gower St/ Euston Road, London) so huge that the Tories splinter further.

Solidarity 399 will be out on 6 April. We skip a week of our usual schedule because of Easter.

Why Socialist Feminism?

A book by Women in Workers' Liberty



The revival of feminist discussion and activity has drawn many new, younger feminists into writing and organising in Europe and North America. Emerging feminist movements elsewhere in the world, in India, Turkey, the Middle East and elsewhere, fighting against oppressive political systems and stark economic inequalities, have thrown up new forms of struggle. But what kind of overall feminist perspective do we need to radically change the world?

As revolutionary socialists fighting for a society based on human need not profit, Workers' Liberty makes class struggle and radical social change central to our feminism. We are socialist feminists. This pamphlet explores what "socialist feminism" might mean in the context of the latest "wave", and global conditions.

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102 pages, £5

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Schools face 8% funding cuts

By Elizabeth Butterworth

On 17 March, the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan released a White Paper entitled “Educational Excellence Everywhere”, containing the government’s plans for state schools in England.

As predicted, government is seeking to set about changing the way funding is allocated. The current funding formula has led to large disparities in the amount of funding per pupil different schools in the country get. But instead of levelling up, funding will decrease in real terms overall by about 8% per student over the next five years, and some areas will be hit much worse, particularly inner-city neighbourhoods and London.

The current proposals will result in many schools not meeting the needs of the children, particularly the most oppressed, with the

greatest needs and who have complex and unstable backgrounds, or who are just poor.

Teacher shortage, funding cuts, poverty are going to create a horrendous environment for both staff and students. In London, where the cuts will be possibly between 11 and 20%, it would not be surprising to see more regular assaults on teachers, pupil-pupil violence and more staff on long-term leave with mental illness. A recent report from the Educational Support Partnership showed that 84% of teachers have had mental health issues in the last two years — partly due to workload.

The government gives more money to schools it sees as successful, then says the schools it hasn’t allocated enough money aren’t doing well enough — this isn’t just a correlation, but an obvious cause. More staff means more contact time with students which means we can better serve them, get to

know them, and help them to deal with their problems. And let’s not forget that these funding cuts to schools are in a broader context of austerity around the NHS and welfare budgets which will directly impact upon the most vulnerable children and young people.

At the National Union of Teachers’ (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. It has taken until now for that campaign to get started, and it has not been done by a big central push by the union. So we must run to catch up.

We need an energetic and political campaign involving teachers, governors, councillors, parents and pupils across the country to

demand more funding. Some London NUT branches have set up a “Keep London Schools Great” campaign, which is a good start. However this campaign needs to move beyond a few public meetings run by the already-existing union structure and become a real campaign run by local committees of teachers, students, parents and other campaigners.

The successful strike in sixth form colleges shows that strikes over education funding can be done.

A political campaign around the funding cuts, which makes positive demands about increasing funding, linked to a national contract for teachers and against the academisation plans, and involves parents and students, combined with strikes, could push back a government which looks increasingly weak on this issue.

“The data. They get between me and the child I’m teaching.”

By Patrick Yarker

I teach on an MA course designed for practitioners. I’d asked a group to talk about a time when they were made to question what they were doing in school or why they were doing it.

Such a task can generate emotionally-charged responses. On this occasion, what I heard seemed to express frustration with a defining feature of contemporary teaching: a rattling of the bars.

“I hate the data. Absolutely hate the data.”

The vehemence of the comment brought me up short.

The teacher explained that she was required to have a seating-plan which mapped where each student sat. On the plan, each student’s name had to be surrounded by an array of categorisations: gender, ethnicity, designations for SEND or EAL or receipt of Pupil Premium funding, prior attainment in a host of tests, indication of when the student joined the year-group, and level of so-called “ability”.

“The data. They get between me and the child I’m teaching.”

Others in the group endorsed the view that the information provided to them, supposedly meant to help them know and understand each of their pupils more fully and quickly, in fact worked to obscure the personhood of the pupil, usurp the teacher’s own judgement, and obstruct the process of building a relationship.

Each categorisation, seemingly neutral in itself, sets off a host of associations and expectations in whoever encounters it: expectations about behaviour, about background, about likely future performance or attainment. These colour the way the young person is seen. They shape the stance taken in school towards the person, and so can prompt a reciprocal stance or set of behaviours in the student. Expectations on both sides begin to fulfil themselves.

Not only that. Teachers must collect quan-

titative data for each student, turning context-bound performances into numerical summations which become a proxy for the individual, and are used to impose targets or predict future performance. Qualitative data, drawn from observation and encounter, and refined in all the ways that inform a teacher’s expert assessment of a student, are not accorded similar status. Teachers feed the hunger for data, but it’s an unbalanced diet.

The technological capability now exists to collect vast sets of numbers through which cohorts of students can be compared and monitored according to a wide range of categories.

Projects such as RAISEonline, Fisher Family Trust and the Data Dashboard all signal the expanding power of certain kinds of quantitative information within the re-configured state education system, and testify to its importance as an active element in central government’s policy-making and control-wielding. Quantitative data enable comparisons, and comparisons justify policy.

INSTRUMENTALIST

Quantitative data underpin predictions, and so strengthen the instrumentalist model of teaching as a process of diagnosis and remedy, the implementation of supposed “best practice”.

Informing such an approach to policy is a readiness to believe that young people come in “kinds”, and that the categories by which each young person in school is designated are in fact real, rather than the convenient fictions by which we help ourselves make sense of our experience and try to create common ground. The power and reach of the technology, and the apparent self-evident nature of many of the categories (her first language is indeed not English; he is in receipt of PP funding), seem to generate a factual, objective, or even a scientific, way of conceiving of the young person. Numbers exercise authority. The data manufacture



their own consent.

But even the most seemingly fixed and natural of categories can be dissolved. Think about gender.

Just as importantly, think about surprise. Every time a student surprises by doing something they were deemed incapable of doing given their level of so-called “ability”, the entire system of categorising students according to notions of fixed innate ability stands exposed as constructing what it purports only to describe. The label, the category, does not scoop up the person whole and entire and pin them down as known.

The label is a forgetting, as much as it is a description. It forgets that we cannot be fully known. It forgets that we are not objects wholly determined by our history, our background, our current context, our genetic inheritance, our social circumstance.

Far from offering the key to constant school improvement “the data” lock teachers behind bars. Young people do not come in kinds. Each is an individual, to be met as such by the teacher, and to go on being met as such. Teaching is a matter of relationships, a human meeting in the present, not a question of diagnosis and intervention according to norms or comparisons. The complexities of the classroom are generated by the material reality of human encounter, and these complexities are to be respected if education is to have the chance to happen.

Ironically, the teachers I was talking with have a more than common respect for “data”. Engaged in a research project, they

understood that quantitative data can have a place (notably in providing evidence of discrimination), and that the antipathy they felt towards what counted as data in school was not the fault of the numbers, or even of the obsession with measurement. The problem lies in the way those numbers are made to speak.

NARRATIVES

For no set of data ever speaks for itself. The narratives built around data spring from the values and beliefs of the narrator, the number-cruncher, the interpreter.

Neoliberal education has told a story about what young people are, and what education should be for, and what good teaching is, all of which is based on a set of principles and values the teachers in my group recoiled from. The way “data” were understood and put to use in their settings required some of these teachers to work in ways which did not merely irritate or overburden them, but challenged them at their core.

They found themselves made to act in opposition to what centrally mattered to them as teachers dedicated to doing their best for their students. They found themselves becoming teachers they did not want to be.

By sharing their thinking about their experiences, they discovered not only that each was not alone in how she or he felt, but that together they had a basis from which to begin to talk about what could be done to change the situation.

Sixth Form colleges strike over funding cuts

By Graham Korn

Members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in Sixth Form colleges (SFCs) struck on Tuesday 15 March in response to ongoing underfunding of the sector.

Since 2011, SFCs have seen year on year cuts amounting to a reduction of approximately 14% in cash terms and far more in real terms. Even though the government, under union pressure, has called a halt to its cash cuts and claims to have “protected” funding, this is bogus. In fact it has been frozen and, with increases in national insurance and pension contributions in the offing, colleges will see a further real terms cut of 8%.

Additionally, SFCs, uniquely among educational institutions, have to pay VAT on goods and services, meaning the average college loses £250-300,000 per annum.

NUT members have had enough. In a ballot 86% of voting members called for strikes and a vigorous campaign to demand restoration of funding to pre-2011 levels.

The Department for Education challenged the NUT's ballot, claiming that the strike was a political strike and therefore illegal, in a high court case held the day before the strike. In a significant win for the whole labour movement, the court ruled in favour of the NUT as the ballot question had referenced the risk to members' terms and conditions from funding cuts. Other unions should look to using this tactic to stage political strikes, rather than using the law as an excuse.

On 15 March, NUT's 2000 SFC members turned out in force. Reps reported colleges being effectively closed as many students voted with their feet and didn't bother to turn



up, knowing most of their lessons would be cancelled. Lively pickets and leaflet distributions took place, with a very good response from the public, who were surprised and angered to hear how deceitful and disingenuous this government's claims about education are.

In London between four and five hundred activists (nearly a quarter of our membership) attended a rally and then marched to the Department of Education, where a very noisy protest blocked the road and sent a clear message of anger and determination from teachers to defend education. Union leaders told members that this was just the start of a high profile campaign to expose this government and turn back their disastrous policies. Well, they ain't seen nuthin' yet.

We're counting on your support at the protests and street stalls all over the UK over the coming weeks.



Teachers and support staff on strike in Lewisham over academy plans in 2015.

Failing students, fattening bosses

Michael Wilshaw is the head of the official schools-inspection body Ofsted, and before that was the head teacher of an academy.

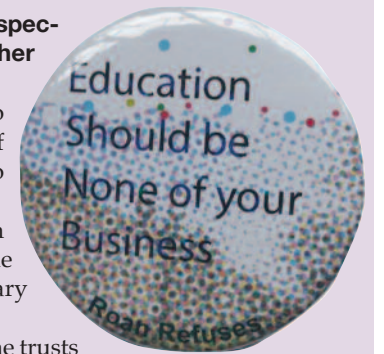
Yet even he has concluded that turning schools into academies often does much more to raise the pay of school bosses than to help students. In an official letter to the Government on 10 March, he wrote:

“The average pay of the chief executives in these seven [of the biggest multi-academy] trusts is higher than the Prime Minister's salary, with one chief executive's salary reaching £225k.

“This poor use of public money is compounded by some trusts holding very large cash reserves... Furthermore, some of these trusts are spending money on expensive consultants or advisers to compensate for deficits in leadership. Put together, these seven trusts spent at least £8.5 million on education consultancy in 2014/15 alone”.

Wilshaw did not go into it, but there have been numerous cases of academy bosses giving contracts to firms run by themselves or their family members or cronies. Academisation offers great scope for corruption and the creation of top-heavy, overpaid management hierarchies.

Wilshaw found that the seven trusts had poor results and “many of the academies in these trusts are failing their poorest children”.



Academisation plans can be defeated

By Patrick Murphy

The Tories' plans for forced academisation of all schools were announced only a week after the third reading of the Education and Adoption Bill which widens the group of schools who can be forced to become academies by adding a new category called “coasting”.

The threat posed by the Education and Adoption Bill and rumours about the White Paper have already led clusters of schools around the country to make their own decisions to become academies in advance in the hope that going earlier will give them more control let them and avoid predatory sponsors.

It is also becoming much harder and rarer for local campaigns to defeat academy proposals. Consultation requirements are now minimal, and conversions take place rapidly. The inability of the unions representing school workers to unite and mobilise a serious national challenge to the academy agenda has both emboldened the government and demoralised anti-academy campaigners.

However, this all out assault can be defeated.

This is a government with a small majority, divided bitterly over Europe and now over cuts. The Tories are also divided on academisation.

Immediately after Osborne's announcement, the Tory Cabinet Member for Education at Hampshire County Council went public to express his horror at a policy which could “lead to the country's education system imploding”. He invited anyone who agreed to contact him and claimed to be determined to oppose it. In any case, it will be neither easy nor appealing for Tories to spend time defending and taking flak for a major policy which was not in their manifesto.

A week before the budget, Ofsted chief Michael Wilshaw publicly denounced seven of the largest academy chains as worse than the worst local authorities. The National Union of Teachers, the Anti-Academies Alliance, and the Local Schools Network have been diligently tracking the evidence on pupil outcomes and Ofsted judgements for years. Even if those are your only measures, academisation does not improve schools.

The Hampshire Tory said: “I do not understand it [the academisation plan], particularly as there is no evidence whatsoever that the academy conversion of schools is improving standards”.

The conversion of every school to academy status is, in purely practical terms, a mammoth undertaking. More than a decade after the programme was first introduced by the Blair Labour government, about 60% of secondary schools are academies. However, only around 15% of primaries are academies, and so only about 19% of state schools overall.

The majority of the conversions were also the result of coercion of one kind or another. The government are desperately short of sponsors for new academies and openly dissatisfied with the existing large academy chains, many of whom they have prevented from taking on more schools. There is a serious possibility that they have over-reached in making this announcement.

All of these factors should provide grounds for a major and loud public campaign to defend state schools and local democracy.

Organise across academies!

Teachers and other workers already in academies can be united with the resistance to forced academisation of other schools by a union battle for a national contract, negotiated with the government, which sets terms and conditions for all schools.

At present academy and free school bosses are not bound by the “Blue Book” and “Burgundy Book” which set pay and conditions in most state schools.

An effective campaign requires union organisation across academy chains. At present, academy bosses can “divide and rule” even within the same chain, telling one school in the chain that it must accept worsened conditions because another school already has them.

Most organisation in the National Union of Teachers, the biggest teachers' union, is still through local associations geared to local authority areas. New forms of organisation — “combine committees” across academy chains, fighting to level up not down across the chains — are urgently needed.

Standing against counter-revolution

David Finkel* reviews *The Two Trotskyisms Confront Stalinism. The fate of the Russian Revolution, Volume 2*, edited and with an introduction by Sean Matgamna.

On 23 July 1939 the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed an agreement that would be known to history as the infamous Stalin-Hitler Pact. A week later, pursuant to secret clauses in the deal, German troops smashed into Poland and on September 17 the Soviet Union invaded from the east.

The impact on global politics was overwhelming; in essence it marked the beginning of the Second World War. The crisis soon further deepened when the Soviet Union invaded Finland.

The impact on the left was no less shattering. One example among many: in August 1939, the US Communist Party in the heavily Polish-American industrial city of Hamtramck, Michigan had hundreds of auto worker members. By September, effectively nothing remained of it.

The large collection of documents, articles and speeches reviewed here focuses on a more specific issue: how the war, particularly in the way it broke out, impacted the theory, politics and organisational unity of the American Trotskyist movement — one of the leading forces in the newly formed Fourth International, and one of the very few that would be able to function throughout with considerable democratic freedom (despite the wartime imprisonment of leaders of the Socialist Workers Party under the Smith Act), above all without the imminent threat of murder or concentration camp internment.

This is the second volume under the title *The Fate of the Russian Revolution* published by the Alliance for Workers Liberty. A third volume is projected on other topics, including “the Trotskyists and the Jewish Question in the period of the Holocaust.”

As with the first volume, AWL leading figure Sean Matgamna provides a lengthy historical overview plus timeline and glossary of names. Readers should be aware that this “Introduction: Leon Trotsky and the Two Trotskyisms” presents AWL’s distinctive take on the period and the movement’s subsequent factional history, a viewpoint sharply hostile to the “Orthodox” side of the argument. Those questions belong to a separate discussion beyond the limited scope of this review.

As many readers will already know, the SWP went through a major split in 1940, shortly before the murder of Leon Trotsky by Stalin’s agents in Mexico. It is generally understood that the split, in which the minority formed the rival Workers Party, was over “The Russian Question” (and some tangled organisational issues — a quite literal “who stole the chairs” episode is recorded here). But that heading is too broad to precisely identify what happened, or why it still has present-day relevance.

In what follows here I’ll be aiming primarily at the first-time readership. The best entry point into this massive collection, I think, is not at the very beginning but rather the speeches by James P Cannon and Max Shachtman at the New York SWP branch on October 15, 1939 as the crisis erupted in Europe and engulfed the international left (pp

176-217). What would it be worth to go back as a fly on the wall there?

In these detailed presentations, the issues and contradictions that divided and fractured the Trotskyist movement are all foreshadowed, and the subsequent polemics will fall into place. That the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy ruled a “degenerated workers’ state,” having formed a monstrous totalitarian regime and acting as “an agent of imperialism” but still resting on the base of nationalised property (means of production) that remained the priceless conquest of the working class upheaval that produced the Russian Revolution, was not in question — yet. But that common assumption could not cover over a growing chasm over the meaning of the events unfolding in Europe.

Speaking for the National Committee and Political Committee majority, Cannon lays out the perspective that nothing has fundamentally changed in the party’s formula, “In brief: the theoretical analysis — a degenerated Workers’ State. The political conclusion — unconditional defence against external attacks of imperialists or internal attempts at capitalist restoration.”

Against the minority’s view that the “unconditional defence of the Soviet Union” was no longer fully sustainable, Cannon insists repeatedly that despite all of Stalin’s crimes, nationalised property won through the revolution remains a decisive factor: “(N)ever surrender any position before it is lost; the worst of all capitulators is the one who capitulates before the decisive battle.” (p. 178)

It was a telling challenge, which would ultimately force the minority to re-think fundamental assumptions and to conclude that the battle actually had been lost — that nationalised property in and of itself, after being stripped of any shred of working-class control, indeed where that nationalised property had become a tool in the hands of the bureaucracy for the exploitation and immiseration of the workers, had no progressive or revolutionary class content. This would become the core of the theory of “Bureaucratic Collectivism,” but that lay in the future.

MINORITY

Shachtman, speaking for the party minority, argues that the “unconditional defence” position must be scrutinised not in the light of the degenerated workers’ state theory, but rather in the context of “the nature of the war.”

Indeed, “(t)he question of Stalin’s invasion of Poland and of the Baltic countries is the question of today, and that is the one we must answer first...” (p. 211)

Here the majority faced a problem: While Trotsky from Mexican exile had condemned Stalin’s invasion of Poland as a crime against the world socialist revolution, a few members of the SWP majority called for supporting it, and Cannon himself regarded it as a military “episode” on which he would not issue judgment.

Stalin’s invasion of Poland, not in any defensive action but in collusion with Hitler’s Germany, inevitably posed the question of whether the Soviet Union itself was “imperialist” and what that might mean. Says Cannon, any such consideration “would mean a rejection of all our theoretical preparation for the war” (p. 189). After all, the party had already taken into account the likelihood of Soviet tactical alliances with either the fascist or “democratic” imperialist states, and both had indeed come to pass.

Shachtman, pushing the theoretical enve-

lope about as far as possible in the context of 1939, posits that “I do not believe that the Stalinist bureaucracy represents a new class, in any case none comparable with the great historic classes of society like the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But in the sense in which Marx used the term to describe the Bonapartist bureaucracy [i.e. of mid-19th century France under Louis Bonaparte – DF], so, too, the Stalinist is an ‘artificial class.’ It seeks new resources of labour and of raw materials, markets, seaports, gold stores, and the like... it is interested in a growing national income only for its own sake. Only in order to enhance its privileges and power – economic, social and political...the Stalinist regime seeks to resolve its domestic crisis by a policy which we cannot characterize as anything but imperialist.” (210)

NEW REALITIES

Naturally there is a great deal more on both sides of the debate than can be properly presented here, but this cryptic overview gives some idea of the complexity of the issues and what was at stake as revolutionary Marxists grappled theoretically with a rapidly moving target, and politically with deeply disturbing new realities.

Did the Soviet invasions of Poland and Finland represent potentially an expansion of the proletarian revolution? Should the workers of Finland, who had suffered murderous repression under a rightwing post-World War I dictatorship, welcome the Soviet army as liberators, or would they (or their children) be waging guerilla resistance against the invaders?

Essentially, everything else in this volume represents in detail the working out of these respective positions and their consequences – not in retrospect but in the white heat of events, with the protagonists on both sides of “the two Trotskyisms” acutely feeling the weight of responsibility for a struggling world movement.

Does any of this much matter now, when the Soviet Union has passed into history and when what was known as “Trotskyism” has been transformed almost beyond recognition? In my own view, there are things to be learned here from both the strengths and weaknesses evidenced in these debates. (Disclosure: Like those of the editors of this collection, this reviewer’s sympathies are with the so-called Shachtmanite or “Third Camp” side, but I’m not arguing the point here.)

On the positive side, the discussions of the essential relationship of democratic to revolutionary socialist struggles, and the application of historical materialism to understanding the nature of capitalist imperialism and the Stalinist counterrevolution, are frankly on a higher level here than much of what passes for present left discourse. See for example Jean van Heijenoort’s concise theorization in 1945 of “The eruption of bureaucratic imperialism.” (386-94)

On the negative side, it’s impossible to overlook the heavily male-dominated and frankly often “masculinist” character of the polemics on all sides. If I’m not mistaken (some contributions are unsigned editorials), with the exception of Trotsky’s widow Natalia Sedova all the authors are men. Neither of the women leaders of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, Raya Dunayevskaya (Freddie Forest) or Grace Lee (Ria Stone, later Grace Lee Boggs) are represented.

As is generally the rule in faction fights, other issues arose, one of which was Trot-

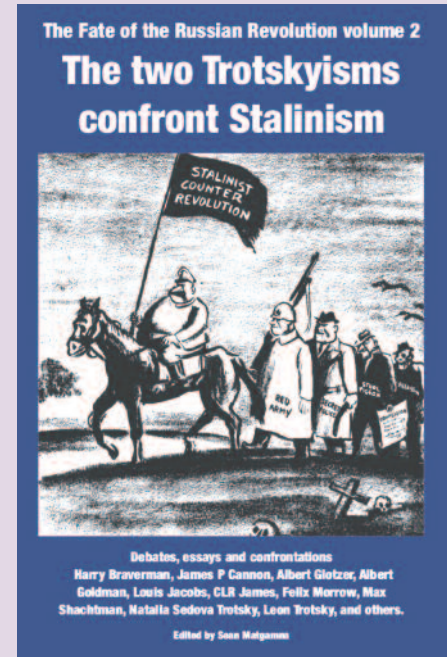
sky’s insistent demand to create a party that would be “habitable for workers” rather than dominated by intellectuals. The name-calling around this serves as a reminder that this problem hasn’t been satisfactorily resolved, and that as many of us learned from painful experience, factional warfare creates pretty much the worst atmosphere for addressing it.

If the 1939 speeches of Cannon and Shachtman frame the debate between “two Trotskyisms” as a whole, the concluding section of “Essays” sum up many of the conclusions drawn from it. For me, Shachtman’s extensive 1954 critique “Isaac Deutscher and the End of Socialism” (pp. 655-706) is particularly important. In fairness, it should be noted that Cannon similarly savaged Deutscher’s apologetic analogy of Stalin with Napoleon’s carrying the French Revolution into the rest of Europe.

There is both a tragic and yet heroic character to this material. Perhaps the fighting spirit of a movement standing up against both capitalist and Stalinist counterrevolution is captured in Shachtman’s October 1939 speech to the membership:

“I am not a Finnish patriot any more than I am a Polish patriot. But as a revolutionary Marxist I am also a consistent democrat. I am ready to subordinate democratic considerations only to socialist and internationalist considerations...”

“I am prepared to subordinate even these [national and democratic rights of Finland and the Baltic countries] to the interests of the socialist revolution if and where the two conflict. I am not ready to subordinate them to the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy” (p. 204).



The Two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism

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* This review first appeared in the US socialist magazine *Against the Current* no. 182

100 years since Ireland's Easter Rising

23 April marks the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising. Matt Rawlins tells the story.

By 1916 the history of Ireland had been inextricably linked with that of Britain for seven hundred years, and the connection had not been a happy one.

The English (and later, British) imperialists took several centuries to conquer Ireland, in the process committing many atrocities and persecuting the Gaelic Irish. After the religious Reformation, conflict between Catholics and Protestants came to be central in Irish life. There were many uprisings, most significantly that of the United Irishmen in 1798, inspired by the French Revolution.

The Irish peasantry were deprived of their land and turned into a quasi-serf class dependent on subsistence monoculture. When the potato crop failed in the 1840s, hundreds of thousands died. Catholics did not win basic civil rights until the 19th century.

From the struggles for civil rights for Catholics and for land reform rose the "Home Rule" party. This was a bourgeois nationalist party which demanded autonomy ("Home Rule") for Ireland within Britain. Its strategy was to make it worth the British Liberal Party's while to grant autonomy by acting as the Liberals' loyal tail in Parliament.

By 1912 it looked as if the Home Rulers — by now, led by John Redmond, they had a majority of Irish MPs — would get what they wanted. However, this promise was thrown into doubt by the outbreak of the First World War two years later.

In 1910, James Connolly, founder of Ireland's first Marxist organisation, the Irish Socialist Republican Party, returned to the country from the United States. The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, an industrial union modelled on the "one big union" syndicalist organisations like the IWW in the USA, was growing fast. Indeed, it was the biggest and most powerful union Ireland had ever seen. The union's leader was Jim Larkin, a talented organiser who had already led a number of hard-fought strikes, including successful action by the Belfast dockers (in 1907).

Connolly, himself an IWW organiser during his period in America, became an organiser for the ITGWU and its main theoretical voice. In Dublin the union was rapidly organising the particularly downtrodden workers of the capital. The employers, led by William Murphy, decided to take the offensive in 1913 when they organised a lockout of unionised workers and brought in scab labour.

The Dublin bourgeoisie combined with the state and the Catholic hierarchy against the workers, many of whom were destitute. Larkin and Connolly were briefly imprisoned.

In response to police violence and the arming of scabs who then committed murders, the ITGWU formed a workers' militia attached to the union, the Irish Citizen Army, to protect the workers' pickets and marches.

The 1913-14 battle between the workers and the bosses in Dublin was fought in the context of the great "labour unrest", one of the greatest upsurges of workers' struggle in British history.

There was a great groundswell of grass roots support for the Dublin workers within the British labour movement. Connolly addressed a meeting on the Dublin lockout which filled the Albert Hall. Larkin toured the industrial centres of Britain declaring, "I am out for revolution" and calling for the

blackening of Dublin goods. For a while a general strike seemed a real possibility.

However the TUC General Council refused to endorse the ITGWU's call for the blackening of Dublin goods, or indeed any other kind of effective solidarity action. Some unions sent ships up the Liffey with food for the locked-out workers and their families, but not enough.

By February 1914 the workers, starved of solidarity and, more basically, of the means of subsistence, could go on no longer. Gradually they began to go back to work, and the great lockout ended in an uneasy draw, with neither side having achieved its objective. The ITGWU had been set back in its struggle to win universal recognition, it was weakened, but the employers had not succeeded in smashing it.

Meanwhile the cause of Home Rule faced important obstacles, not least from the situation in heavily industrialised Ulster. This area had long had closer economic ties to industrial Lancashire and Clydeside than to the rest of Ireland. The Ulster Unionists were campaigning for the exclusion of Ulster from the Home Rule Act.

The Ulster bourgeoisie, backed, encouraged, and helped by the British Tory party, formed an armed force, the "Ulster Volunteer Force" (UVF) with the objective of preventing Home Rule by force.

The leader of this faction, the lawyer Edward Carson, set up an "Ulster provisional government" ready to resist the rule of a Home Rule government in Dublin. In response nationalists formed an armed organisation of their own, the Irish Volunteers. Initiated by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret revolutionary nationalist organisation, it was taken over by Redmond's Home Rule party, which later also allied with Britain in the war.

A group of army officers at the Curragh, in Kildare (the main British military base in Ireland), signed a declaration stating that they would not obey orders if they were ordered North to suppress the UVF. The Asquith Liberal government buckled before the threat. Instead of arresting the UVF and Tory party leaders, they looked for "compromise"

PARTITION

The partition of Ireland was now on the agenda. James Connolly predicted this would mean "a carnival of reaction both North and South, [it] would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured."

Partition — the exclusion of six north-east Ulster counties, two of which had Catholic-nationalist majorities — was put on the statute book, but its coming into operation was postponed for the duration of the World War that now broke out.

At the outbreak of war the Irish Volunteers split. Tens of thousands of "National Volunteers" joined the British Army; so did tens of thousands of their erstwhile adversaries, the Ulster Volunteer Force. But the appointment of the arch-Unionist Carson to the war cabinet, and the extreme favour shown to UVF members sapped the credibility of the Volunteer leaders who supported Britain in the war. A minority of the Volunteers formed their own organisation (the "Irish Volunteers") which remained implacably hostile to the British state.

Most prominent among the more militant leaders was Pádraig Henry Pearse, a noted writer and republican orator. This current,



Irish Citizen Army

led by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, had many different ideas on how an independent Ireland was to be organised — but what linked and defined them was the fact, in Connolly's words, that they were "a 'physical force party' — a party whose members are united upon no one point, and agree upon no single principle, except upon the use of physical force as the sole means of settling the dispute between the people of this country and the governing power of Great Britain." But agreement on an eventual political goal, he pointed out, was what could "make the successful use of...[force] possible."

The pressures of the war drove the militant labour movement and the bourgeois nationalists — the best of whom, Pearse for example, had backed the workers in 1913-14 — closer together. The IRB conspirators wanted a rising before the British suppressed the armed organisations. So did Connolly.

The ICA acted as an open organisation, conducting armed manoeuvres and demonstrations and protecting pickets, workers' meetings and labour movement premises. As Connolly had written: "We are resolved upon national independence as the indispensable groundwork of industrial emancipation, but we are equally resolved to have done with the leadership of a class whose social charter is derived from oppression".

By now the ICA was a relatively small organisation. However, this organisation still had the active support of the ITGWU workers and was a cohesive and well-trained and equipped organisation.

Eventually, the IRB, which James Connolly had joined at the beginning of 1916, decided on Easter 1916 for an all-Ireland rising. The plans were detailed and realistic, and envisaged a protracted struggle.

The Proclamation of the Irish Republic, read out by Pearse from the steps of the General Post Office on the first day of the Rising, was a democratic and non-sectarian document, in accord with the Enlightenment ideals of the United Irishmen, undertaking to "treat all the children of the nation equally".

However, so concerned were the IRB that the Rising should not, like so many Irish revolutionary movements of the past, be betrayed by informers that they were, so to speak, "betrayed" by their conspiratorial mode of politics.

Large segments even of the non-IRB leaders of the Irish Volunteers — including its commander-in-chief, Eoin MacNeill — had no idea that a nation-wide uprising was planned for Easter Sunday under cover of what by now a routine military exercise — a "general mobilisation". When on Easter Saturday MacNeill found out, by accident, what was planned, he countermanded the order to mobilise by inserting statements in the national press.

In Dublin, Connolly, Pearse, and their comrades, faced with this catastrophe, decided

that Dublin alone should rise. Connolly and Pearse, though they knew they could not win, decided to fight in Dublin in order to avoid a demoralising defeat without a fight.

The Rising — postponed for a day — began at noon on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916. Only a third of the Dublin Volunteers had turned out, and most of the units in the rest of Ireland did not mobilise at all. The Rising, as its leaders and many of the insurgents knew perfectly well, was doomed as soon as it began.

After six days of heavy fighting, in which several hundred people were killed, the republican Provisional Government surrendered in order to prevent the indiscriminate massacre of Dublin civilians. Martial law was declared and the republican leaders were immediately put on trial in a military court.

Ninety death sentences were passed and fifteen people were shot, including the wounded James Connolly, shot propped up in a chair, and Pádraig Pearse. In July 1916, the 16th leader of the Rising, Roger Casement, was hanged in Pentonville Jail.

The Rising had received virtually no support in middle-class areas of Dublin. The Dublin Chamber of Commerce hastened to condemn the Rising, calling it "Larkinism run amok". There was little support among workers, too, though the participation of James Connolly, who had been the military commander of the Dublin force, could not be set workers who knew him to think. But after the fighting ended, when restrictions on movement were lifted, inevitably working-class people mixed, at work and elsewhere, and discussed what had happened.

Revulsion against the executions had some impact, but it would have been very limited without a deep reserve of support for the republicans and their aims. Nor would the Rising have led to the seismic shifts in Irish politics — the destruction of the Home Rule party and its replacement by Sinn Féin, by then the party of the insurgents — without the prior destruction of the credibility of the Home Rule party, which had accepted Partition ("as a temporary measure"). That discredit, not the Rising itself, was decisive both in generating the Rising and in shaping its political sequel.

In April 1918, against great opposition, Britain imposed conscription in Ireland, and in the General Election Sinn Féin, now the bourgeois republican party, gained two-thirds of Irish seats. There followed a War of Independence. It was successful for all of Ireland except North-East Ulster. Partition was agreed; but "the Irish Free State" was born as a separate state with "Dominion" status, giving it far greater autonomy than envisaged in the 1914 Home Rule Bill — indeed, virtual independence.

Deprived of the best of its leaders — Connolly and his able lieutenant Michael Mallin dead, and Larkin in the USA — and affected by the repression, the relatively small organised labour movement, the only force with a hope and a history of uniting Catholics and Protestants, accepted subordination to the bourgeois nationalists.

In the South there was a civil war in 1922-3 between supporters and opponents of the 1921-2 Treaty which ended the War of Independence. Despite being defeated in the Civil War, the anti-Treatyites, under De Valera, formed a government in 1932.

The South became a Catholic-sectarian state; the North was a Protestant-sectarian statelet. Tragically, Connolly's prediction that partition would mean "a carnival of reaction both North and South" had been proved absolutely correct.

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

25-29 March

NUT conference including: Workers' Liberty fringe debate: Europe — in or out? Sunday 27 March, 1.30pm, Premier Inn, BN1 1RE.

LANAC migrant solidarity fundraiser, Sunday 27 March, 9pm, Cowley Club, BN1 4JA. Brighton

Tuesday 29 March

Another Europe is Possible Edinburgh launch meeting 7pm, venue TBA bit.ly/AEIPEdinburgh

Friday 1 April

Sheffield rally against the Housing Bill 5pm, Sheffield Town Hall bit.ly/SheffieldHousingBill

6-8 April

Junior doctors' strike Across the country bit.ly/JDstrike

Saturday 9 April

Another Europe is Possible national gathering 10.30-5, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London, WC2H 8EP bit.ly/AEIPgathering

Saturday 16 April

March for health, homes, jobs, and education 1pm, Euston Road/Gower Street, London bit.ly/16AprilMarch

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

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

Push Labour on the NHS!

LABOUR

By Sacha Ismail

On Friday 11 March, the campaign for the Labour Party to take a strong stand on the NHS suffered a serious though expected defeat. Nevertheless, its momentum is growing.

On the 11th, hardly any Labour MPs showed up to support the NHS Bill submitted by Green MP Caroline Lucas — guaranteeing it would not be heard and missing a major opportunity to embarrass and pressurise the Tories on the health service. Given that this was a Bill signed by the Labour leader and Shadow Chancellor, that is a seriously bad result.

The problem is not just about the Bill. It is a wider issue of Labour sticking to its pre-Corbyn message on health, which means refusing to promise reversal of the privatisation drive and the reinstatement of the NHS as a universal, comprehensive public service.

A few NHS campaigners have drawn the conclusion that making demands on Labour is pointless, distracting or harmful. But despite the NHS Bill fiasco, and in part because of it, most have drawn the opposite conclusion — that a more, concerted serious campaign to change Labour's stance is essential.

Campaigning specifically around this aspect of saving the NHS began in earnest in mid-2012, after the Tories pushed through the

Health and Social Care Act. Activists around the NHS Labour Lobby initiative got policy submitted to Labour's autumn 2012 conference by 17 CLPs, organised a successful lobby and, after a fight, managed to get the policy passed. This policy was far from perfect, but far too radical for the Miliband bureaucrats, who ignored it.

That initiative continued for into early 2015, making some progress in the grassroots of the labour movement and educating NHS activists about the issues, but with limited results. After Jeremy Corbyn's election, the campaign merged into the new Momentum NHS, expanding and stepping up its activity. More people have got involved in the last six months than in the three years before.

The first Momentum national committee in February endorsed Momentum NHS's activity so far, and the Momentum steering committee on 17 March passed a comprehensive policy for a national campaign on the NHS. When this is implemented, it will be a big step forward, drawing many Momentum groups, trade unionists and Labour Party activists into the fight.

The 19 March meeting of Health Campaigns Together agreed to work jointly on various proposals for pressuring Labour — including a new model motion for CLPs, plans for intervention into Labour



Party conference, agitation for Labour to back a demo in support of the junior doctors, and a dedicated national activist meeting on these issues — and created a working group with Momentum NHS to push things forward.

HCT, Momentum NHS, Keep Our NHS Public, the NHS Bill campaign and others will be meeting John McDonnell to discuss the NHS on 13 April.

Undoubtedly part of the wind in the sails here is the junior doctors' dispute, as well as many other NHS workers' struggles like the SLAM dispute in South London. A number of left junior doctor activists are playing a good role in this work. And victories in this sphere can strengthen NHS workers' campaigns too.

Get involved. Get your Labour Party, trade union branch, Momentum group or NHS campaign involved.

• For more info and regular updates see the Momentum NHS website labournhslobby.wordpress.com Email: momentumnhs@gmail.com

The economic problem is not overspend

By Martin Thomas

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell's speech about "fiscal responsibility" on 11 March was probably intended to buy him space to attack Osborne's 16 March Budget cuts.

However, all the anxious promises that a future Labour government will balance current spending with current revenues — although Osborne still doesn't do that after six years as chancellor — only feed the superstition that the economic problems since 2008 are due to the Blair and Brown Labour governments "overspending".

They aren't. The reason for the crash and the slump was the giddy profiteering and speculating by the banks, not public spending.

There is no special merit in a government increasing its debt burden. However, a rigid rule of balancing current spending with current revenues is foolish. As Simon Wren-Lewis, professor of economics at Oxford University and an adviser to McDonnell, has pointed out, "the rule is likely to make the deficit much less of a shock absorber, and so lead to unnecessary volatility in taxes or spending".

Also, since raising taxes is politi-

cally difficult, often slower in effect, and involves running uphill in times of economic crises which reduce the tax base, the rule has a built-in bias towards panic "volatility" (cuts) in spending.

McDonnell has long campaigned against cuts. It looks as if he has been pushed into his latest statements by the conservative elements in the Labour leadership office, grouped around sympathisers of the allegedly-Marxist Socialist Action group. They have warned McDonnell and Corbyn against supposed "ultra-leftism", and argued for accepting "fiscal responsibility", since the Labour leadership election and again more recently.

Probably also a reflection of that section of the Labour leadership office were McDonnell's off-key statements about "the wealth-creators". "The Labour party are the representatives of the wealth creators — the designers, the producers, the entrepreneurs, the workers on the shop floor." He claimed that his policy "has been welcomed this morning by [people] right across the business sector, business leaders, entrepreneurs as well as trade unions. The wealth creators have welcomed it".

According to Mike Savage, a re-

searcher at the LSE, inherited loot is 70% of all household wealth in Britain today, and is rising towards 80% by 2050. One of the most booming industries in slump-ridden Britain is the rise of "family offices", where financiers work full-time on managing and conserving the wealth of rich families.

"Wealth-creator" is conservatives' pet term for capitalists. In fact capitalists' riches come from the exploitation of the real wealth-creators, the working class — or from active exploitation done not by the capitalists, but by their parents and grandparents.

McDonnell added "the workers on the shop floor" at the end of his list of "wealth-creators", and put "designers" (i.e. some particularly skilled workers) at the start of the list. But the idea that a good economic policy can be pursued in alliance with the whole "business sector" is false. It can only prepare the way for a collapse when the CBI and other bosses' groups denounce left-wing policies from Corbyn and McDonnell, which they will.

We urgently need to build a socialist counterweight in the labour movement to the conservative pressures on the Labour leadership.

£10 an hour and sick pay

By Sacha Ismail

On 21 March cleaning and catering workers employed by multinational corporation Aramark at the South London and Maudsley NHS mental health trust, which has sites across South London, struck for a £10 an hour minimum wage, full sick pay and proper unsocial hours payments.

Colin Little, the GMB rep at the Ladywell Unit at Lewisham Hospital, which is part of SLaM, spoke to *Solidarity*:

"We all work for Aramark. We've come out together to fight for £10 an hour, for fairer wages. We're not getting fair wages or sick pay. These guys work very hard, all of us work very hard, as a team, supporting each other.

"Before now Aramark never listened to us or talked to us about our desire for better terms or conditions. So as a union we decided to meet up and contact them, and have a meeting with them. We had a meeting with them, and they offered better pay, but when they made a proposal it was only 5%, 20p, which is rubbish. They promised better at the next meeting, but



Aramark workers on the picket line at Bethlem Royal Hospital

only came up with 40p. Also you have to work for one year to get any sick pay.

"We decided to come out here today to fight, to get better pay for all us. We're going back to work tomorrow, we'll be in touch with the union, and we'll plan another strike. We're looking at 6 April. We've turned their offer down and so we're going to continue till we get a better offer.

"We want everyone to come out and support us, and to spread the word the way Aramark treats its workers and about our struggle.

We know many workers, not just us, are not happy. We need people to make their voices heard."

At the Ladywell site, strikers were joined by activists from Lewisham Momentum and the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, as well as several junior doctors.

- Messages of solidarity to nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk
- For more on the dispute see the bit.ly/1UB8qM1 and bit.ly/1T4Wz83

Battle to stop libraries closing on 1 April

By Peggy Carter

Library workers in Lambeth struck on 22 and 23 March in their ongoing battle to save ten libraries.

The campaign has already had some victories with the confirmation that Tate library will remain open as a library. However the council is now focussing its plans on Minet and Carnegie libraries, which it will close on 1 April 2016.

Lambeth Unison has held a consultative ballot of all council workers which has returned 85% in favour of council-wide strikes to support the library workers.

Librarian and Unison steward Tim O'Dell said: "Councillors hoped they could push things through quietly but they've got a fight on their hands – the community are preparing legal action and have organised a major campaign –



and we, the staff, are taking the only action which we can – to strike. We have just three weeks before they start removing books and padlocking doors. They can't be allowed to give away our libraries"

Library workers from Brixton library organised a "Picket and

Rhyme" children's storytime event (renamed from the library's usual "Wiggle and Rhyme") on the picket line outside Brixton library on 22 March.

- Sign the petition: bit.ly/lam-bethlibraries

Piccadilly line drivers fight dictatorial bosses

By Ollie Moore

Drivers on London Underground's Piccadilly Line will strike on 23-24 March, 19-20 April, and 20-21 April.

The drivers, who are members of the RMT union, are battling an authoritarian management. Workers say bosses routinely flout their own disciplinary policies; one of the strike's demands is that warnings issued at the Oakwood depot be

withdrawn.

The dispute stretches back beyond October 2014, when a planned strike was called off after unfairly sacked worker Paul Okoro was reinstated. The RMT says the issues have flared up again since, and that management's reckless conduct in negotiations is making strikes inevitable.

The rank-and-file socialist bulletin *Tubeworker* said: "Workers in pretty much every function, grade,

and area will recognise the picture from the Picc: managers drunk on power, wielding disciplinary sanctions in an arbitrary and authoritarian fashion.

"That seems to be the flavour of the month (year?) for LU managers right across the board.

A solid strike on the Picc could stop managers at Picc depots in their tracks, and send a strong signal to dictatorial bosses elsewhere on the job."

Job losses in energy industry

By Luke Hardy

Job loss announcements in the energy sector last week are proof that the privately-run sector is failing workers, service users, and future energy security.

Npower announced large losses and plans to reduce the workforce by 2400. Workers and unions are still in the dark as to where the company plans these job cuts to hit and when. It could include workers for other companies who work on behalf of Npower.

Npower is doing particularly badly, with poor consumer service and failed outsourcing. But the problems at Npower are repeated across the industry. The whole structure created by privatisation is a byzantine mess designed to give the illusion of competition over the delivery of identical electricity and gas to the home. At the same time the private companies were unwilling or unable to make the massive investment needed to move their processes and systems into the modern age. High prices and poor service have become the universal complaint.

Soon after the job losses announcement the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) reported that service users are being

overcharged by £1.7 billion a year! The CMA highlight that the poorest and most vulnerable customers get the worst deal as they often end up being forced on to pre-payment meters that charge more per unit of energy. They have no security of supply if you run out of money or the corner shop is shut.

Did the CMA judge that pre-payment meters should be got rid of? Did the CMA call for the nationalisation of energy? No! Their recommendations were minor tinkering with fixing pre-payment energy prices and, more bizarrely, giving more customer information to the energy industry. According to the CMA, if 37 energy companies can send you junk mail it will fix a fundamentally broken and flawed sector.

Jeremy Corbyn stood for leadership of the Labour Party promising to take energy into public ownership. Since he won the leadership these promises have gone quiet. The entire labour movement and beyond need to be fighting for the public ownership of energy, but under democratic and workers control.

That is the only way to eradicate fuel poverty and provide secure, clean and carbon-neutral energy.

FE pay strikes called off

By Charlotte Zalens

Following a one-day strike by lecturers and support staff in FE colleges over pay on 24 February, both UCU and Unison have said they will not call any more strikes over the 2015/16 pay claim.

Instead the unions say they will try and initiate discussions on a draft pay claim for 2016/17.

Such a swift turn-around begs the question of why the union even called the 24 February strike at all. FE workers are becoming increasingly demoralised and demobilised as dispute after dispute is called off after one or two strikes, and no wins.

NUT members in sixth form colleges struck over funding on 15 March (see pages 6-7), this was a perfect opportunity for workers



UCU members on strike last year

across the post-16 education sector to organise and strike together about the chronic underfunding of the sector, but it wasn't taken.

If UCU and Unison plan a dispute over 2016/17 pay, a serious organising drive of the membership on college level is needed, and a well publicised and series strategy to win to give members confidence that the union will not just stage another one-day strike.

Dockers want union agreement

Dockworkers at London Gateway docks are fighting for a collective bargaining agreement.

The dockworkers, organised by Unite, have been campaigning for a collective bargaining agreement since the docks opened in 2013, but dock management DP World are insisting on an unnecessary ballot to avoid having to make an agree-

ment.

The campaign is part of a wider picture of trying to re-establish union-negotiated terms and conditions in docks around the country, and around the world, after bosses have largely eroded them.

Support dockworkers by signing their letter to management: bit.ly/1ZnqWqK.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

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SCHOOLS: STOP THE TORY PLANS!

By Patrick Murphy

George Osborne announced in his Budget on 16 March that all schools are to become “academies” (autonomous businesses directly funded by central government) by 2020.

There will be no choice, no consultation and no alternative available for children, parents or local communities.

It is the first time a major policy from one of the big government departments has been launched by the Chancellor rather than the minister responsible. No explanation was given other than the fact that the Budget was committing £1.5bn to fund the transfer.

The following day the Department for Education (DfE) published a White Paper with the forced-academisation plan, plus removal of the right of parents to elect representatives on governing bodies and abolition of Qualified Teacher Status.

Although something like this was expected the scale and speed were surprising. The imposition of academy status on all schools was not in the Conservative election manifesto. Nor were the attacks on parent governors or QTS. All three ideas would have been near-impossible for Tory candidates to defend in an election.

Right now a national public campaign can and should be built in defence of locally-run democratic education.

Some of the initial response to the government's announcement showed the right spirit; marches and demonstrations to Department for Education buildings in London. Coventry, Newcastle and Nottingham.

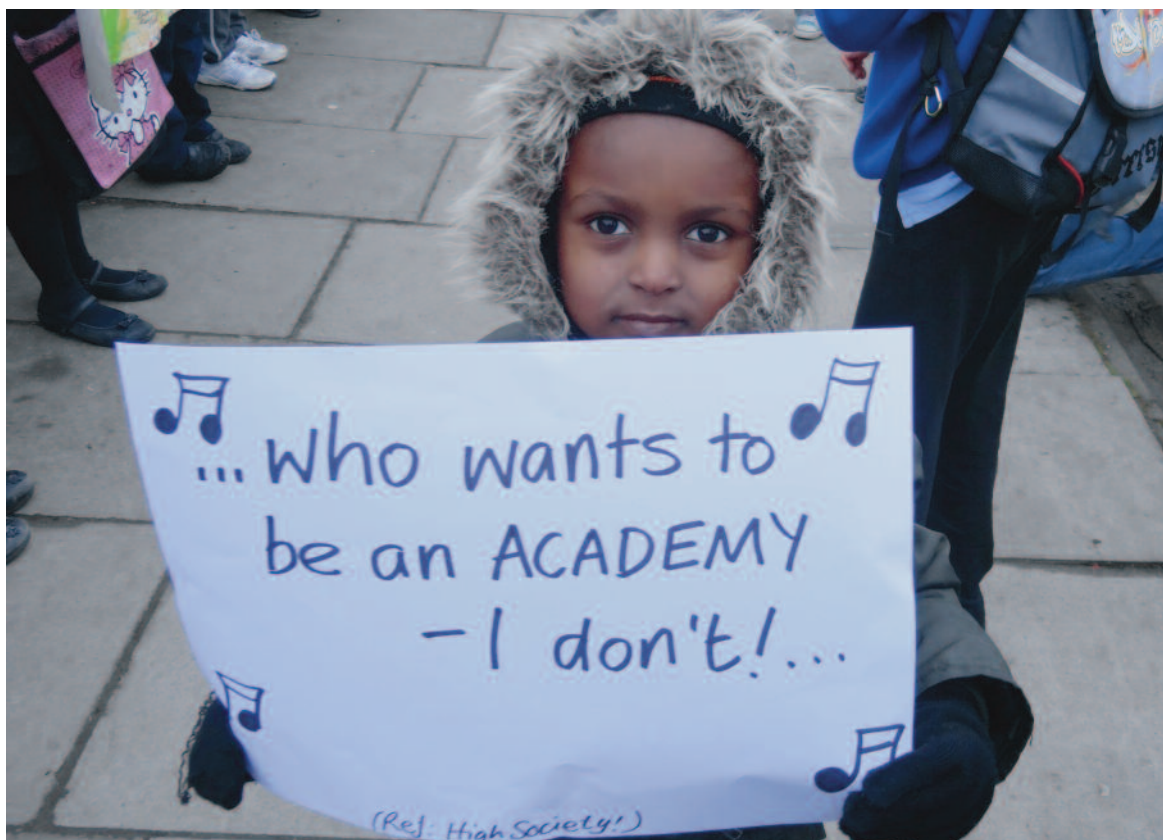
Unions should demand that Labour pledge to repeal academy-enabling legislation, guarantee no more academies from day one, and legislate to bring existing academies back into local democratic control. They should call for a commitment that a Labour government will negotiate a national contract with teacher unions which would apply in all state-funded schools.

Action can be organised now in some individual schools. In Small Heath in Birmingham and John Roan School in Greenwich industrial action by teachers resulted in the withdrawal of academy plans.

The prospect of immediate national strike action as a direct response to the academy programme is, however, slim. Apart from the fact that an open anti-academy strike would be illegal, over 50% of secondary staff are already in academies.

However, every school worker in every maintained and foundation school is now threatened with a transfer of their contracts to a new employer, with no guarantee on their terms and conditions beyond the limited safeguards provided by TUPE. Industrial action could be called in those non-academy schools to oppose to the transfer of employment to academies on the grounds that this is now the announced intention of the government.

The unions could aim to ballot members in all non-academy schools at the same time to demand the withdrawal of the plans. If that strategy is adopted, the National Union of Teachers should approach all of the other school-based unions and the TUC Public Service Liaison Group and argue



for joint action. In the light of the serious defeats of the last six years, it will take some time to prepare members for such a significant industrial battle, but it can be done.

Straight away we need a big national political campaign. We need broadly-organised public meetings in every locality which unite parents, teachers, pupils, governors, support staff and local authorities who are prepared to defend themselves. Such meetings should aim to establish local defence campaigns, demand that local MPs oppose the plans in Parliament, and organise local demonstrations. The

NUT and any willing allies should promote this approach and aim for a national demonstration for education in the summer term.

A petition demanding a referendum on the academy plans launched on the official Parliament website by Bridget Chapman, an activist in the LANAC network, gained over 60,000 signature within two days. By the time you read this article it will have garnered enough support to ensure a Parliamentary debate. The scope for resistance is huge.

This resistance provides an opportunity to unify all teachers

around action for a national contract for teachers which limits working hours, asserts firm caps on workload, controls class sizes, and ends performance pay.

All teachers, whether they work in academies or in the maintained sector, have an interest in and the right to take part in that broader campaign.

Running these two campaigns together — the political fight to defend state education and the industrial fight for a national contract — gives us the possibility of turning the tide against the Tories.

More on pages 6-7

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Solidarity editorial: Cathy Nugent (editor), Gemma Short, and Martin Thomas

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