

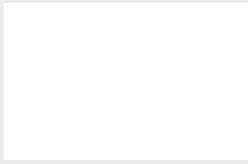
Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



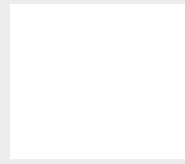
Volume 3 No 201 20 April 2011 30p/80p

For a workers' government

**AV: what we
say** page 5



**On the streets
of Tunis** pages 7-9



**The many sides
of Malcolm X**
page 12



Royal Wedding: a celebration of privilege and parasitism

**UP THE
REPUBLIC!**

**See
page 5**

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

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

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to 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 the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual 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.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to sell — and join us!

020 7394 8923 solidarity@workersliberty.org
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road,
London, SE1 3DG.

GET SOLIDARITY EVERY WEEK!

Special offers

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged £9 unwaged
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged £17 unwaged
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) or 50 euros (44 issues)

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

.....

.....

I enclose £

Germany to go non-nuclear

By Dave Elliott

250,000 people joined demonstrations across Germany following the Fukushima disaster, calling on the government to phase out nuclear power completely.

And after a massive swing to the Greens in the regional elections, Merkel's battered government now seems willing to comply, with the backing of a key power industry trade association, BDEW, which has called for a full phase out by 2020 or 2023 at the latest. Two of the association's members, nuclear plant operators E.ON and RWE, opposed the decision, but were outvoted.

Germany currently gets 26% of its electricity from nuclear and 17% from renewables, so there will have to be a rapid switch over. Current plans are to push renewables up to 35% by 2020, 50% by 2030, 65% by 2040, 80% by 2050. That may have to be accelerated.

German Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen told *Der Spiegel*: "The events in Fukushima marked a turning point for all of us. Now we jointly support phasing out nuclear energy as quickly as possible and phasing in renewable energies."

In Japan, with the Fukushima plants still far from safe and the exclusion zone now extended to 30 km, there have also been major anti nuclear demonstrations — on 10 April, 15,000 people marched in Tokyo in a demo organised by local shopkeepers, and 2,500 called for the closure of the so far unaffected Hamaoka nuclear plant, which is on a earthquake fault line.

Meanwhile, what's happening in the UK? The government has set up a nuclear safety review, and the final phase of the reactor "Generic Design Assessment" process has been delayed until after the safety review is completed later this year. However, initial indications were that the government was not expecting the safety review to result in major changes. Secretary of State Chris Huhne told the House of Commons on 24 March "we will have to wait to see its results and base the debate on the facts", but, he added "I do not anticipate that it will lead to enormous changes". And later on he was quoted as saying: "There is no intention for us to do anything but learn the lessons... for example, about the back up for cooling."

But there are also some

We need a stronger campaign for renewables

signs that a policy shift may occur — with possibly a slow down in the proposed eight new plant expansion programme, reflecting the extra costs likely to be involved in trying to make the plants, and their on-site spent fuel stores, acceptable after Fukushima. They are all on the coast, at sea level.

It may also have to rethink the proposal from the nuclear industry to extend the operating life of the UK's existing plants — many are of similar age to those at Fukushima.

However, in perhaps a poorly timed initiative, the nuclear lobby is pushing for the UK to spend more money on a new programme, for Mixed Oxide Fuel (MOX) production,

using some of the 112 tonnes of Plutonium stored at Sellafield.

This plutonium came from the reprocessing of spent fuel from existing UK and overseas nuclear plant, some of which has been converted to mixed plutonium and uranium oxide fuel for use elsewhere — e.g. in Japan. There was 95 tonnes of Mox in Fukushima Reactor 3. They may not exactly be in the market for more.

We don't need any of this. A whole fleet of recent scenarios have suggested that the UK, EU and the world as a whole, can get near 100% of its power from renewables by 2050, or maybe earlier, if the political will is there.

South Australian unions demand Labor dump right-wing leader

By Martin Thomas

"The reason why the Labor Party was established was because the unions [knew] we needed to elect our own representatives to parliament to make the laws that cared for workers and their families..."

"But in South Australia today what have we got? The complete opposite.

"Our Party... belongs to us and we're going to take it back. The unions formed Labor to legislate for workers..."

"We need to reshape Labor with a new leadership team..."

With those words, Wayne Hanson, state secretary of the AWU, the most conservative of Australia's big unions, proposed a motion at the South Australian Labor Party conference in late 2010 to demand the resignation of Labor leader, and premier, Mike Rann.

When Rann made a government reshuffle in February, Janet Giles, secretary of "South Australia

Unions", repeated the call for Rann to quit on behalf of the state's whole union movement. "All of today's shenanigans are really the same boofhead politics we've seen for some time from this government", she declared.

The stance of the South Australian unions is a model for how Britain's unions should have responded to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in 1997-2010.

It is the exception in the Australian union movement; and developments in other states indicate that union members in South Australia need to take control of the anti-Rann campaign to ensure it is not satisfied with sops.

In New South Wales, the unions ran a big campaign against electricity privatisation, and in 2008 both blocked the scheme and forced the resignation of its architect, Labor premier Morris Iemma.

Once Iemma was gone, however, John Robertson, the secretary of Unions New South Wales, who had led the anti-privatisa-

tion campaign, became a Labor member of the Legislative Assembly and a minister in a Labor government carrying through modified privatisation and quickly becoming as right-wing as Iemma ever was. Robertson is now Labor leader in NSW.

A serious union response across Australia would mean unions debating and sticking to a clear set of working-class policies; campaigning on that basis against Rann, and also against Queensland premier Anna Bligh and federal prime minister Julia Gillard; and demanding ALP accountability to the working class.

But most of the "left" unions have gone quiet, leaving the political initiative to backroom deals and to right-wing AWU leader Paul Howes, who was one of the main figures in the dumping of Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd in June 2010 and his replacement by Gillard.

Bob Carnegie, currently running for election as Queensland branch secretary of the traditionally

"left" Maritime Union of Australia, states in his latest leaflet:

"Under my leadership the MUA Queensland branch will not involve itself in ALP machinations over the heads of the membership.

"It will use the union's representation in the Australian Labor Party, both at state level and nationally, openly to champion workers' interests and challenge the ALP leaders. What the union says and does in the ALP will be democratically discussed and decided by MUA members.

"The MUA will speak out in the same way that South Australian unions are currently speaking out for the removal of Mike Rann as unworthy to be a Labor representative.

"It will not let issues drop once a token victory has been gained, as the NSW unions let issues drop once Morris Iemma had been ousted and his particular variant of electricity privatisation blocked"

Misrata: our Guernica, our Srebrenica

By Martyn Hudson

From back page

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has organised the transport of migrant workers and wounded to Benghazi — but this is less for humanitarian purposes than to deflect a potential refugee problem away from European borders.

Qaddafi's deputy foreign minister Khaled Kayim is arguing for the ruthless destruction of the city. Amongst the loyalist cheerleaders for the regime — a regime which still holds a great measure of support in the western areas of Tripolitania — there is a popular song which is being transmitted everywhere. The

"Zenga Zenga" song paraphrases the words of Saif al-Islam and declares that "House to house, room to

room, alley to alley, person to person we will disinfect the whole country from filth". The same will be

their intention for Adjabia and Benghazi if the regime has any measure of success.

Fundamentally, NATO does not know what to do. Air strikes outside of rebel-held cities are one thing but intervention into a divided city at war is militarily tricky.

Meanwhile the flickers of Islamism in the rebel movement are fading. Even if they become more vocal in a post-war democratic settlement, they will be moving away from a jihadist military posture. Or at least that is the feeling of both international and domestic observers.

Fearful of the impact that intervention might have on moving people towards Islamist critiques of the US, NATO is wavering towards

inaction. But leaving the rebellion to the hands of the tyranny will also affect NATO's reputation among the millions of people fighting for democracy in the region from Homs in Syria to the Arabian peninsula.

Our concerns are different from NATO's, but there are massive implications for workers solidarity and the bringing together of workers in, say, Newcastle and Yemen around a struggle for democracy and liberty and against the vulgarities of a pro-tyrant left.

To throw our efforts into pushing NATO towards inaction, rather than into supporting the Libyan resistance, would amount to backing a massacre of our people, our children on the streets of Misrata.

Slipping towards Qaddafi?

When the revolt against Qaddafi started in Libya, hardly anyone on the left — however broadly defined — could say anything in defence of Qaddafi.

With the start of the "no-fly zone", many on the left started to sideline the issues within Libya and focus their efforts on denouncing NATO.

Now the denunciation of NATO, in turn, is acting as a lever to introduce defence of Qaddafi and denunciation of the rebels into broad-left discourse.

The *Morning Star* of 18 April, in an article by Alexander Cockburn, started by saying that the casualties in Qaddafi's assault on Misrata, while "cause for dismay", were "less than a medieval siege

or Leningrad" (the 1941-44 siege of Leningrad by the Nazis, in which up to four million people died).

Remember being told during Serbian tyrant Slobodan Milosevic's attempt to drive out or massacre the whole Kosovar population of Kosova, that Milosevic was not as bad as Hitler? Same argument.

Cockburn slid on to suggest "that the rebels might actually be under the overall supervision of the international banking industry, rather than the oil majors".

Their provisional government has set up a central bank. Why is that sinister?

Qaddafi, so Cockburn claims, had a scheme to create a new international reserve currency, "the gold dinar", to replace the dollar and the euro.

This crackpot scheme,

Cockburn suggests, was regarded as a dire threat by the main central bankers. "Taking down the [Qaddafi] Central Bank" is "top of the globalist agenda".

Cockburn concludes that he would "like to see an objective account of Qaddafi's allocation of oil revenues versus the US's in terms of social improvement".

Nothing in Cockburn's article is stated openly and honestly, nothing is argued out objectively.

Everything is done by insinuation and sarcasm, just as old-style Stalinists used to deflect criticism of the USSR by studied wondering whether the regime was quite as bad as extreme Western right-wingers used to say, or whether the right-wingers' motives for criticism might be suspect.

"Stop the War" abandons rebels

By Dan Katz

The Stop the War Coalition (STW) is now an embarrassing rump of Stalinists, Counterfire, the SWP, and similar types.

STW, which takes its lead from the classless "anti-imperialism" of the SWP and its Counterfire offshoot, is more concerned to strike poses of hostility to Britain and the US than to help those fighting for democracy in Libya.

In a recent statement, "Why we oppose Western intervention in Libya", STW claims that "Cameron, Sarkozy and Obama have openly declared that NATO military intervention in Libya is a war for regime change". In fact these leaders have said explicitly that Qaddafi is not a target and

their war is only one to protect civilians.

STW demands an "immediate end to NATO bombing and military intervention". It makes no call on Qaddafi to stop fighting. The meaning of these demands is the overrunning of Misrata and Benghazi, the slaughter of rebels, the re-imposition of Qaddafi's rule, torture and terror.

STW now sees the rebels as a mere outpost of imperialist ambition. "The Libyan opposition in Benghazi [has been subordinated] to the interests of Britain, France and the US".

But the rebels are fighting for democracy, not on behalf of international oil companies, with whom, anyway, Qaddafi has long been happy to do business.

Burqa ban is an appeal to the right

By Vicki Morris

French president Nicolas Sarkozy, flagging in the opinion polls, is attempting to boost his popularity with appeals to the right and an exaggerated concern about the state of integration — or not — of France's Muslim minority into national life.

This has been shown most obviously with the recent ban on wearing the burqa or niqab (face veil) in public.

This law came into force on 11 April. Ostensibly a law against "hiding your face in public", the law has so many exceptions — wearing a mask for sport, work, carnivals, etc — and the debate around it makes it clear that it is aimed at the tiny minority of French Muslim women who wear

Marine Le Pen

the niqab/burqa (authorities put the number at about 1,900). There are estimated to be about five million women of Muslim background in France.

Sarkozy's party, the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), recently held a conference to discuss the integration of Muslims into French life,

and have produced 26 proposals for discussion. These include extending a prohibition on wearing headscarves in school to mothers accompanying school trips.

The proposals seem to be aimed most at convincing potential Front National (FN) voters, with their anxieties about the

number of French Muslims (10%), that the UMP is "on the case", and at reinforcing what they have been attempting for years now, to foster a specifically French Islam, without ties to foreign influences including more fundamentalist strains in the Middle East and north Africa.

Thus, one of the 26 proposals is "the exercise of religious services outside of religious buildings will be subject to permission". Sarkozy has expressed concern about the Islam "of the cellars", where the state cannot hear what is being preached.

In 2004, the government banned the wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in schools; this included large crosses and the Jewish skullcap, but was mainly targeted at the headscarf worn by some young women from a

Muslim background.

Sarkozy has been shaken by opinion polls which show that he would do worse in next year's presidential first round vote than Marine Le Pen, the new leader of the Front National. A *Le Parisien* poll showed Le Pen on 23 per cent, Sarkozy on 21 per cent, and Socialist Party leader Martine Aubry on 21 per cent. Aubry is likely to be replaced as the Socialist Party candidate by Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who is likely to do better than Aubry.

On these figures, Sarkozy would not be present in the second round, which would be between a Socialist Party candidate and Le Pen.

A majority of the public, around 76%, supports the burqa ban. The ban is also supported by a majority of Muslims.

Syrian uprising continues

By Mark Osborn

"From alleyway to alleyway, from house to house, we want to overthrow you, Bashar".

The movement against the repulsive, brutal regime of Bashar Assad continues to spread geographically and deepen in intensity.

On Monday 18 April thousands marched in the city of Homs to bury dead protesters killed over the weekend. Mourners chanted, "Either freedom or death, the people want to topple this regime!" Later Suhair Atassi, a prominent human rights activist, said 10,000 people had occupied Al-Saa square in the centre of Homs late on Monday night. Demonstrators said the square had been renamed Tahrir Square and they planned to occupy it until the regime fell.

The state responded by sealing off the town. Live ammunition and tear gas were used following a deadline to clear the area.

Over the past month of protests over 200 people have been killed by the regime in an effort to stamp out dissent. A number of soldiers have also died, possibly killed for refusing to fire on protesters.

However, demonstrations were also reported on Monday in the southern city of Daraa — where protests began a month ago — in the Barzeh district of the capital, Damascus, and in Ain al-Arab in the mainly Kurdish north.

Alongside repression, the regime has also promised reforms. It has released Kurdish and Islamist political prisoners. Assad also stated that 300,000 Kurds — born in Syria, but currently living without citizenship — would be granted Syrian nationality.

Most recently Assad has said the hated Emergency Laws, in force since 1963, would be abolished. However, the killings continue.

Egyptian workers' leader tour

Kamal Abbas, General Coordinator of the Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services, will speak in the UK in May.

- 19 May — FBU conference, Stockport
- 19 May — Egypt Workers' Solidarity meeting, Liverpool
- 20 May — Egypt Workers' Solidarity meeting, London (6:30pm, Room G3, SOAS)

Labour, but fighting cuts!

By Jack Yates

Polls suggest the Tories and Liberal Democrats will lose 1,700 councillors on 5 May, mostly to Labour.

That will bring into even sharper relief the contradiction between the unpopularity of the cuts — and the Tory/Liberal government forcing them through — and the reality of Labour-controlled councils imposing them locally.

In Broxtowe, Nottinghamshire these elections look set to force a change in the borough council. Labour is unlikely to win an overall majority but they will almost certainly increase their council representation. But in Broxtowe, two of the Labour candidates are campaigning on a clear “no-cuts” platform.

Greg Marshall (candidate in Beeston West ward) and Andrea Oates (Beeston North) joined Labour after the 2010 General Election.

During their election campaign, they have com-

Labour activists need to be won to defying the cuts

binated an anti-cuts message on the streets with arguing inside the party. Greg Marshall: “There are councillors and council candidates in Broxtowe Labour Party who do not support this [anti-cuts] position. They are frightened by stories from the 1980s, though individual councillors can no longer be attacked in the same way. Their argument is that we should wait for the return of a Labour government to sort the mess out. But that means the damage will al-

ready have been done.”

TRADE UNION LINKS
Greg and Andrea convinced five other candidates to sign a letter to local trade unions committing them to campaign with trade unionists who work in or use the services that are under attack.

“As future councillors in a victorious Labour council in Broxtowe, we pledge ourselves to vigorously oppose... cuts, support jobs for your members, defend public services and

remain accountable to the organisations such as yours, whose money and support keep the Labour Party in existence.”

As Andrea Oates commented at a recent debate organised by Nottinghamshire Trades Council: “We need to build an anti-cuts movement that means it’s not just a minority of councillors standing for a no cuts budget but the majority of people in a large campaign.”

Seeking to re-establish

and re-make links with the trade union movement locally is an important step in preparing any potential act of defiance by these councillors. It also has implications for the kind of party and labour movement that is needed to not only defeat the Tory/Liberal alliance but also govern in the interests and under the direction of the working class.

“RECKLESS”

Also at the Trades Council debate was Councillor Alan Rhodes, leader of the Labour Group on Nottinghamshire County Council.

Although Labour councillors voted against the swingeing cuts-budget proposed by the Tory leadership of the council, he claimed that refusing to make cuts or the setting of a no-cuts budget was “reckless”.

Andrea responded that it was “reckless to cut libraries, reckless to cut social services, reckless to close women’s centres”.

Large sections of Bee-

ston have already been canvassed and although many people have simply said “yes” or “no” when asked whether they intend to vote Labour, many have engaged canvassers in lengthy discussions, expressing doubts about Labour’s ability and willingness to stop or reverse the cuts.

In these situations, having a Labour candidate and Labour materials that spell out a “no cuts” position has been decisive in getting votes and winning back votes.

Greg’s and Andrea’s campaigns demonstrate what is both possible and necessary if we are to translate anti-cuts energy and sentiment into political action.

Unfortunately such campaigns are rare due to a lack of confidence as well as a lack of consistent working class politics.

Turning this situation around will require further organisation. If elected, the Beeston anti-cuts candidates and others like them will be put under huge pressure to toe the party line.

Scottish left is in a sorry state

By Anne Field

Calling for a Labour vote, combined with rebuilding the left and pushing the unions to assert themselves politically, is the only serious left policy in Scottish Parliamentary elections on 5 May. That is not because the Labour campaign, or the Labour Party’s policies, are good.

The Scottish Tories will be lucky to hang on to a handful of seats. In the Holyrood elections the basic question is: do you want a Labour or an SNP government (or some kind of coalition with one of those parties at its core)?

The SNP does not claim to be a socialist party. But the policies on which it is contesting the Holyrood elections are far removed from those on which the Tories contested the Westminster elections. There is a big overlap between Labour and SNP policies.

The SNP will contest the elections on the basis of its record in power at Holyrood, rather than a promise of Scottish independence.

In the Westminster election campaign Labour turned to gut anti-Tory rhetoric to bolster its vote. Despite the hypocrisy of the Labour leadership —

given their record in power — it did represent an assertion of basic working-class politics.

In the Holyrood elections, Labour’s anti-Tory rhetoric fulfils a different function. Fundamentally, it is used to avoid challenging the SNP’s policies.

Over the past four years the SNP has implemented reforms — however modest — which Labour failed to implement during the preceding eight years when it was in a coalition with the Lib-Dems. The SNP’s election is largely based on promising a continuation of those policies.

The Labour leadership in Scotland is not prepared to attack the SNP from the left and argue that the SNP’s policies do not go anywhere near far enough. Such an approach is precluded by the Labour leadership’s own politics.

ANTI-TORYISM

Their way out of this dilemma is to appeal to a gut anti-Toryism and claim that Labour is best placed to challenge the Tory (and Lib-Dem) government in Westminster.

One difference between last year’s Westminster elections and this year’s Holyrood elections relates

to the strength — or lack of it — of the Labour left in Scotland.

Numerically, it is probably even weaker than elsewhere in Britain, partly because of migrations to the SNP, or to the Scottish Socialist Party at the time when the SSP was a serious political force. Organisationally, it exists virtually only on paper.

But now and for the foreseeable future the Labour Party remains the focus for trade unions seeking change in the political arena (although how effectively unions organise and fight to secure such change is another question).

The SNP, on the other hand, has no such links with the trade union movement. Despite the fact that some union activists are SNP members, the SNP, by its very nature, has no interest in becoming the “political wing” of the trade union movement in Scotland.

The SNP has moved on from its primitive nationalism of the 1970s and earlier. And its commitment to independence is expressed less vigorously than in the past.

But its overarching political framework is still defined by its goal of an independent capitalist

Scotland.

Another major difference between the Holyrood and Westminster elections is the fact that Scottish voters have two votes — one for first-past-the-post constituency candidates, and one for regional “lists”.

In a region such as Glasgow, where Labour wins all or nearly all of the individual constituencies, there is arguably little or no point in voting Labour in the regional “list”. In fact, throughout the history of the Scottish Parliament no Labour MSP has ever been elected as a Glasgow “list” MSP.

LEFT CANDIDATES?

The Holyrood electoral system itself therefore provides openings for parties of the left to win representation in the Parliament, even if those parties are only the voters’ second choice.

So is there a case for voting for one of the socialist parties/coalitions in the regional “lists” (or at least in Glasgow, given the number of constituency seats which Labour is likely to win in that region)?

Certainly not for Arthur Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party (SLP), an organisation which embodies the essentially Stalinist politics

of its founder, and does virtually nothing during elections and absolutely nothing between elections.

And certainly not for “The Respect Party George Galloway (Respect) — Coalition Against Cuts” either. This is no more than a vanity project to try to provide Galloway with a seat in Holyrood. The involvement of the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party (Scotland) would be laughable if it was not so pathetic.

And the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)? There is a stronger case for voting for them than for the SLP and the cheerleaders for Galloway; but the SSP has been unable to recover from the damage inflicted on it by Sheridan, the SWP and the Socialist Party.

Politically, the SSP remains an uneasy amalgam of Scottish populism and vaguely class politics, with more than a dash of vintage Stalinism thrown in for good measure. Its much reduced size also highlights a sectarian strand in its politics: its demand that unions disaffiliate from the Labour Party, for example, simply has no purchase on reality.

In fact, one of the strongest supplementary arguments for a vote for

Labour in the Holyrood elections is the sorry state of the left outside of the Labour Party — above all as represented by those who have thrown in their lot with Galloway.

Whatever the outcome of the election, the incoming government will be one which seeks to pass on the Con-Dem cuts in public spending.

Socialists need to combine campaigning against cuts with rebuilding the Labour left, both individual Labour Party membership and also affiliated unions re-asserting themselves as a political force within the Scottish Labour Party structures.

These are the arguments socialists should be raising in the election campaign, along with trying to develop a network of activists which can provide a basis for campaigning along these lines after 5 May.

• More: George Galloway stands for the people? No, just for himself!
www.workersliberty.org/node/16334
 How the Socialist Party (Scotland) justifies its electoral alliance with George Galloway
www.workersliberty.org/node/16401

Up the Republic!

In recent years, polls have put support for abolition of the monarchy as high as 43 per cent, and one 2002 poll found that 70% believed Britain would be a republic within 50 years.

A majority still accepts the monarchy as harmless, or a boost to the tourist trade, or "a bit of fun". But we have moved on a lot from the days — as recent as the early 1970s — when cinemas would play "God Save The Queen" at the end of every programme, and the audience was expected to stand.

The Windsor-Middleton wedding on 29 April will be used by the Government to try to distract people from the grimness of the cuts, and by the ruling class more generally to build up William Windsor as a "nice young man" whose arrival as king, possibly soon, can revive the monarchy.

This is not harmless. The monarchy is objectionable not only as a blatant celebration of inequality and privilege, but politically.

The Queen, not Parliament, chooses the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister chooses the government, and thus "buys" himself or herself a "payroll vote".

This gives the monarchy huge power. Do not be misled by the fact that the monarchy usually limits itself to show-business. The ruling class keeps the monarchy out of ordinary politics the better to have it in reserve for extraordinary politics.

In 1975, the Queen's representative in Australia, Governor-General John Kerr, sacked that country's reforming Labor government on the pretext of its difficulties in getting its Budget approved by the upper house of Parliament. Kerr installed the Tory opposition to rule instead, called a general election, rode out a big wave of protest strikes, and saw the exultant Tories win the election.

The Queen, or a future King William, could do the same in a political crisis in Britain.

Or if the trade unions should come to reassert control over the Labour Party, and a left Labour majority which the rul-

ing class saw as dangerous were elected to Parliament, the Queen or King William could choose a Labour right-winger for prime minister and through the "payroll" factor enable that prime minister to construct a majority from sections of Labour, Lib Dems, nationalists, and maybe some Tories, pleading the need for "consensus" and "national unity".

Back in 1925, Leon Trotsky disputed the claim of the Labour Party leaders of that time that "the royal power does not interfere with the country's progress".

"The royal power is weak because the instrument of bourgeois rule is the bourgeois parliament, and because the bourgeoisie does not need any special activities outside of parliament. But in case of need, the bourgeoisie will make use of the royal power as a concentration of all non-parliamentary, i.e. real forces, aimed against the working class".

In 1981, writing a book summing up lessons from 11 years as a Labour minister, Tony Benn asked what would happen "if a government elected by a clear majority on a mandate of reform were to introduce legislation to complete the process of democratic advance".

"The Lords veto, the prerogative of the crown to dismiss and dissolve, and the loyalties of the courts and the services to adjudicate upon legitimacy and to enforce those judgments might all be used to defend the status quo against a parliamentary majority elected to transform it".

The monarchy is a feeble reserve power than it used to be. Having decided that its traditional methods of self-promotion, deliberately developed by Disraeli and others in the years beginning with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, had become too old-fashioned to continue, from the early 1980s the monarchy tried the methods of showbiz - and fell foul of them.

With people such as Sarah Ferguson, "Duchess of York", as its representatives, it looked seedy, bloated, and boring. Maybe, in time, large sections of the ruling class will decide they could do better with an elected president than with the wretched Windsor family. But for now most of them pin their hopes on William Windsor and Kate Middleton to restore the mystique.

The workers' government which we need in order to rescind the cuts and establish a decent livelihood for all cannot come into existence without democracy and cannot sustain itself without extending democracy.

We need, first of all, freedom of action for the trade unions. We need a federal republic in which public decisions are taken by accountable, recallable representatives, subject to frequent election on a fair system of proportional representation.

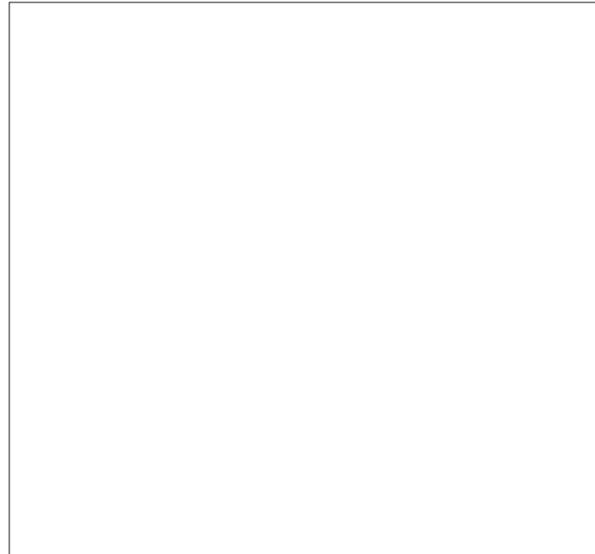
We need freedom of public information and entrenched legal rights for all citizens. We need rights of guaranteed access to the means of mass publicity for all substantial and serious bodies of opinion, not only those with wealth.

We need to force the giant corporations and banks to open their books to working-class scrutiny.

Down with the monarchy! Up the republic!

A note about our schedules

Solidarity 202 will be dated 4 May. We're skipping a week because of the Easter holidays.



It will take more than a bit of tat to distract us from their cuts

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2011

**A weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers' Liberty.
Friday 8-Sunday 10 July
Highgate Newtown Community Centre, Archway, North London**

• The rise of the Egyptian working class • The fight against cuts: where does Labour fit in? • Celebrating the Paris Commune • Imperialism and Islamism a decade after 9/11 • Owen Jones on his book *Chavs: the demonisation of the working class* • Are socialists "multiculturalists"? • The strengths and weaknesses of anarcho-syndicalism • The 1880s: the first British Marxists and the rise of the mass labour movement • An alternative history of the Second World War

**Includes a Saturday night social, free creche and accommodation and cheap food.
Tickets bought before the end of May are £18 waged, £10 low-waged/students, £6 unwaged/school students.
Book online at www.workersliberty.org/ideas. Email awl@workersliberty.org or call 07796 690 874.**



AV was used for the New South Wales state election on 26 March, as for almost all polls in Australia. Result: huge disillusion with a right-wing Labor government produced a landslide for the Liberals (Tories), with left candidates and even Greens marginalised. Above: Fiona Byrne, unsuccessful Green candidate in Marrickville.

Democracy, yes! AV, no!

Many improvements need to be fought for in Britain's political system, even within the limits of what Marxists call "bourgeois democracy" (parliamentary-type democracy operating within the social and economic domination of the capitalist class).

The government should be selected and accountable to Parliament. At present the prime minister is selected (or can be sacked) by the Queen, and then the prime minister chooses the government, giving himself or herself a large "payroll vote" to control Parliament.

The House of Lords and the monarchy should be abolished.

Parliament should be re-elected every year, not left in office for four or five years so that it is hard to call governments to account for their deeds with any reasonable promptness. Between general elections, it should be possible for a sufficiently large body of opinion in each constituency to "recall" its MP and demand a new poll there.

"First Past the Post" should be replaced by some form of proportional representation.

On top of those improvements in procedure, the building-up of political parties really rooted in and accountable to the organised working-class, and the creation of a mass working-class press to counter the bourgeois media, are vital to make a reality of formal democracy.

The referendum on 5 May offers no scope for progress on any of those fronts. Neither of the AV political camps are putting any of these arguments. AV is not a democratic improvement. In fact, it may be worse than the present system.

No voting system is perfect. First Past The Post has three big problems.

- It grossly underrepresents minorities, especially minorities spread across the country rather than localised. It thus introduces a bias into the electoral system in favour of the currently-dominant parties remaining dominant.

- It corrupts political choice by pushing people into tactical voting, as for example with the large number of Labour supporters in the south-east who tactically vote Lib-Dem.

- It focuses the major parties' political efforts on a small minority of voters — floating voters in marginal seats — which means, sociologically, on a middle-class and upper-working-class minority.

AV helps none of those problems except the tactical-voting one. The improvement it gives on tactical voting has to be weighed against the new pressure it adds on parties to focus their electoral efforts on hagglng for second-preference transfers from other parties.

The general bias of AV is to polarise politics into two large blocs, each bloc clustered round one main party and tied together by agreements to transfer preferences. It makes it even more difficult than FPTP for radical left candidates to win elections, because of the tendency of second-preferences to gravitate towards the centre of politics.

There are other reasons to vote "no" on 5 May. AV means that the Lib Dems "win" — decide the governmental outcome of — the next general election, more or less however we vote. To some extent the referendum is a referendum on the coalition government. A "no" victory will damage the coalition.

In Northern Ireland AV means pressure on parties to polarise into two blocs, tied together by agreements to transfer preferences, which will inevitably be Catholic and Protestant blocs. It adds a further pressure towards bureaucratised sectarianism in politics.

The introduction of AV will probably "gazump" all other proposals for electoral reform for a while, at least until it has been tried out over several general elections.

Unison: don't break ties with the Histadrut



Eric Lee

One litmus test of whether one is engaged in reasonable criticism of Israel or simple anti-Semitism is whether you think anyone in the Jewish state is a legitimate partner for discussions.

If you think everyone in Israel is somehow complicit in the occupation, that every Zionist is a racist, and so on, you will not want to have anything to do with Israeli peace organisations or the left.

In the trade union movement, this is expressed through the question of relations with the Histadrut, Israel's national trade union centre.

Most unions in most countries have no problem with the Histadrut. In fact, at its congress last year the International Trade Union Confederation representing some 176 million organised workers elected Histadrut leader Ofer Eini as

one of its vice presidents.

But in some unions, there are those who call for a severing of relations with the Histadrut. One of those unions has been Unison.

At its National Delegate Conference in 2009, a resolution was passed calling for "a review of our relationship with the Israeli trade union centre and our sister Israeli unions". In early 2010, a Unison delegation was scheduled to visit the region to follow up on this. The trip was delayed until the end of November and only now, in April 2011, has the union published the report of that trip.

It's a long report, full of information about the various Israeli and Palestinian workers' groups, highly critical of Israel and so on, but the bottom line is that the delegation recommends that Unison keep up its relationship with the Histadrut.

And that's because despite their very best efforts, the Unison delegates could find no one, Israeli or Palestinian, who supported the severing of relations.

In fact, it was the Palestinians who were most adamant on this point.

Here is what the Unison report says in full:

"All the organisations we met during the delegation including the PGFTU, the new Israeli trade unions, and Is-

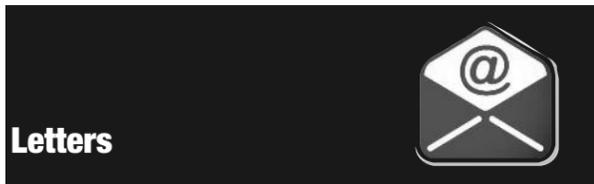
raeli NGOs are or have been critical of the Histadrut in the past for various reasons. However, they all stressed that the Histadrut was a legitimate trade union and with over 700,000 members was clearly the dominant trade union in terms of members and collective bargaining coverage.

"Even the new Israeli unions accepted that the Histadrut had been responsible for Israel's strong labour and employment protection legislation. They also recognised that the Histadrut remained influential, although less so than in the past, with the Israeli government.

"Neither did any of them call on Unison to sever its relations with the Histadrut, in fact the opposite. The PGFTU in particular said that Unison should maintain links with the Histadrut so that we could specifically put pressure on them to take a more vocal public stance against the occupation and the settlements.

"Kav laOved, Koach laOvdim and WAC/Ma'an all felt that international trade union influence on the Histadrut was essential in moving it towards more progressive policies in relation to migrant workers and discrimination against Palestinian Israeli workers."

Every union in the UK and elsewhere that has contemplated severing its ties with the Israeli trade unions should be compelled to read that passage.



Letters

After the March 26 TUC demonstration, we began a discussion around tactics, politics and organisation with an "open letter to a direct-action activist". In future issues of *Solidarity* we will feature further comment, from members of Workers' Liberty and others, on the issues involved. The piece below is from an activist who blogs at The Great Unrest (www.thegreatunrest.net).

Ends and means

The relationship between our political goals and the means we use to achieve them is fraught with difficulty. There's good evidence of this in the recent debates about "direct action" and the "black bloc" (which has largely been conflated with the act of rioting itself).

On the one hand, we can fixate on one particular way of doing things to the exclusion of better possibilities; on the other hand, we can valorise "diversity of tactics" as if it were an end in itself. When people have forgotten what should be self-evident truths it's often necessary to straighten them out by reminding them of seemingly banal ways of looking at the topic.

With that in mind, we need to stop thinking in terms of tactics as a singular — or else infinitely diverse — way of achieving a singular goal. The left needs to incorporate appropriate tactics depending on the challenge that we face in a particular situation. We need to ensure that our line of march on one front doesn't contradict our line of march on another front. Activists need to think in terms of winning immediate struggles and in terms of their long-term political objectives (be they bringing down the current government, ensuring socialist revolution, smashing the state, or whatever).

All of this should hopefully mean more dialogue about ends, rather than the recent fixation on means. I get the impression that a lot of political friction derives from a misunderstanding of the relationship between means and ends and the nature of those means and ends.

Take the example of good-hearted workers or students who ask class-struggle militants why they don't take up a career in politics; the naïve assumption is that the official political channels can be turned to whatever ends one would desire, that they don't contain built-in biases and limitations. The question sounds faintly absurd to those of us who think that the problems of British politics are systemic and class-based, and that the state serves largely to further the interests of the capitalist class, because it is this perspective that reveals the misfit between intentions and methods in this instance.

The problem is to explain our political objectives in the long and short term, and our understanding of the relationship between different available means and the ends we seek, to those who don't share our perspective in the anti-cuts movement, the student movement, or whatever. It would be fair to say that the AWL have a good record on this relationship (and I speak as a non-member), and they're not the only political organisation who do, but I don't want

to encourage complacency or let other Marxist groups off easily.

This puts us on a better footing to critique each other as comrades, serves us in setting reformists straight when we enter into dialogue them, allows a better grasp of our strategy and tactics to the people we work with in broader coalitions, and finally forces us to come to grips with a relationship that is important even just for the sake of us developing the right approach and realistically assessing our ideas.

You have to wonder, for instance, if other left groups would be as keen to fetishise general strikes if they had to explain how a one-day stoppage in the public sector would relate to stopping the cuts, bringing down the government, or whatever it is they seem to think this would be an integral part of — could it be detrimental to this goal if it was a flop, for instance?

Anne Archist

AV: spoil your ballot

I think I disagree with the action advocated in *Solidarity* 3-200 for the Alternative Vote referendum.

While it would not be an appropriate or constructive view to take in an election I think we should advocate a spoiled ballot in the upcoming referendum.

While I agree with the political reasoning, line and headline of the article ("No to AV, no to status quo") I think a no vote also carries a risk akin to a yes vote being a barrier to more serious reform.

If the no vote wins too convincingly those opposed to all reform will be able to say "The people had their say and rejected change when pressed for a fairer voting system".

Similarly a poor turnout will allow nay-sayers to say "People don't care for electoral reform", hence making abstention a poor choice.

Obviously we can make the political argument against First Past the Post and AV — indeed many people have asked for my view. But I feel this is one occasion where it is not enough to argue for a critical vote either way.

I also question why in a situation such as the Labour leadership vote we say a critical yes vote (i.e yes to Abbott but McDonnell would have been better/she's not left enough) but here we advocate a critical no vote because the positive isn't far enough.

I understand the general reasoning and we cannot bullishly say the same thing every time, ignoring context or specific politics. But this seems inconsistent.

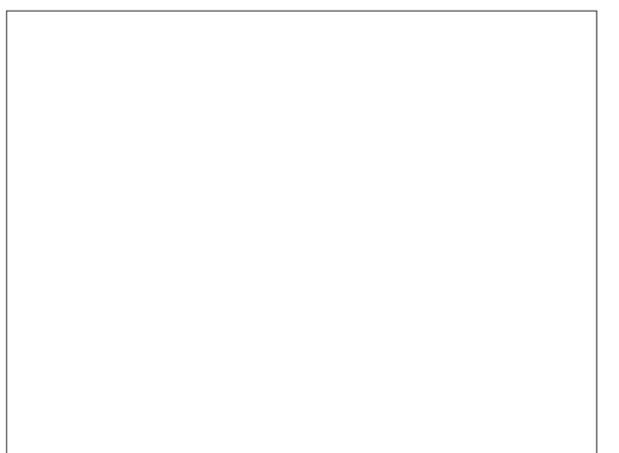
Will Lodge, Essex

Swaziland: epitome of monarchy

King Mswati III of Swaziland and his entourage (he has 13 wives) are expected to be honoured guests at the Royal Wedding, and will stay in a hotel whose rooms cost over £400 a night.

Back in Swaziland, demonstrations against the king's autocratic rule by trade unionists and opposition activists have been broken up by police.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is a landlocked largely-moun-



King Mswati III

tainous African state a little smaller than Wales, with a population of about a million people. A former British colony, it remains an absolute monarchy. Political parties have been banned since the suspension of the constitution in 1973. Three-quarters of the country's population are subsistence farmers. Almost 70% live in poverty.

Swaziland has the highest HIV infection-rate in the world, with more than one in four of the adult population (those aged 15-49) infected. In the past decade life-expectancy has collapsed from about 60 years of age to around 45 (Amnesty International).

Opposition activists and trade union leaders face arbitrary arrest, beatings and torture by police and security forces. Some have been charged under anti-terrorism legislation. Mxolisi Mbata, treasurer of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, died after being beaten by police.

A contingent from COSATU, the South African Trade Union Congress, rallied in solidarity at the border between the two countries and helped ensure wider media coverage of the latest demonstrations.

My daughter is working in Swaziland on a community project. Project-managers told her not to attend work on the day of the recent demonstrations. She heard police sirens throughout the day. Road-blocks and checkpoints remain in place.

As the Swazi king and his circle prepare to attend another extravagantly-self-regarding exercise in royal pomp and circumstance here, orphaned children in his country go without food, the TB wards are full, and poverty, inequality and preventable disease take their daily toll.

For further information, including the Founding Statement of the newly-formed Swaziland Communist Party:

<http://swazilandcommentary.blogspot.com/>
<http://swazimedia.blogspot.com>

Patrick Yarker, Norwich

Cliff and Libya

The SWP's line on Libya contrasts with the arguments of its founder Tony Cliff.

While outlining our principled opposition to the police as the arm of the capitalist state, he would say that, faced with a sizeable fascist mob, it would be unwise for a small band of socialists to shout "Police out!"

Les Hearn, north London

Inside the Tunisian revolution

From 3 to 9 April, Workers' Liberty activist Edward Maltby went to Tunis to meet and hear from left activists there. On this and the following two pages he reports. More and longer interviews can be found at www.workersliberty.org/world/tunisia

Thank you, Facebook

Graffiti on walls in Tunis say: "Thank you, Facebook". Maher, a Facebook activist and blogger, explained why to Ed Maltby.

For people in Tunisia, Facebook is a fundamental part of life. The majority of people use it daily. When the dictatorship censored Facebook, that touched everyone in Tunisia. Everyone felt it.

In 2008 we organised we organised a collective online called "anti-ZBA" [ZBA are the initials of Zinedine Ben Ali]. We used pseudonyms and proxy servers. Internet technicians found other ways of connecting us to the internet after connections were shut down. Facebook was the only platform for expressing yourself, sharing information, as all the media were controlled by the state and oppositional newspapers suppressed.

Our method was to attack Ben Ali and his family, distributing information about their corrupt practices and hypocrisies. It was an organised attack. We could only use Facebook, as YouTube and Dailymotion were blocked.

Our page was attacked by censors. The joke name for internet censors in Tunisia is "Ammar 404". When a page is censored, it brings up the 404 Page Not Found error message; and 404 is a kind of van. The stereotypical image in Tunisia of this van is that it's driven by a guy called Ammar. So the internet censor's name is Ammar. In 2009-2010, we organised an event on Facebook called "Sayyib Salah Ya Ammar" — meaning "let Salah go, Ammar". That slogan meant "let us use the internet freely".

We used the internet to organise a demonstration in summer 2010, where hundreds of people marched in the streets in white T-shirts to symbolise our anonymity.

The police terrorised the demonstrators and there were arrests. One blogger, Aziz Amemou, was arrested. He has

now been given a high-ranking post in the ministry of youth. After the revolution, many bloggers, like Aziz, have got a little something for themselves and they've dropped out of activity. But we have carried on.

Just after the 14 January, plenty of Americans came to Tunis to set up organisations and they enlisted journalists and bloggers who were active among us. Now these journalists and bloggers are not with us any more, because they are busy setting up these stupid associations on American money. I view this as a form of colonisation. It is not an apolitical or an innocent move.

As a blogger, if you are not with the people, behind the people, what are you doing? There is a revolution going on, and these people are setting up politically naive festivals, naive events and groups, instead of taking part in the struggles of the people.

Anti-ZBA started with five or six of us in 2008-9. But the "404 Not Found" demo, with white t-shirts, in 2010 was just normal students. We anti-ZBA were fighting against Ben Ali; they just wanted freedom of expression. The fight for free expression was then a part of the fight against Ben Ali, so we worked together.

Whereas for us, freedom of speech was only one part of the struggle, for many of them, it was the whole deal, mission accomplished. So now they are dropping out, some tak-

ing posts in the new establishment, and so on.

We have carried on fighting against the remnants of the regime. My friend runs a radio station called Kalima, which struggled against the dictatorship, and he doesn't have the right visa to get a radio frequency, so he is still confined to the internet. Various sites are still being taken down. We want freedom of expression and freedom to organise.

There are bloggers who right now are being beaten by the secret police after participating in agitation around the Casbah.

There is now a page called "Front of Progressive Pages for the Protection of the Revolution", which unites the admins of all pro-revolutionary websites — we want them to all be united with the same demands and slogans.

We will work to be on the same wavelength as the people. The internet was useful in the fight against Ben Ali, but it must not stop on the internet. The role of Facebook is to organise real life events. It is a media support for real-life action. People go to the internet to get real information.

Disinformation exists, sure — but it is disproved by the videos and photos that people take on demonstrations. We send activists onto demonstrations with cameras, who stream footage of events. It's the collaboration between internet and real-world activists which is on the order of the day now.

On the streets of Tunis

Ed Maltby describes his visit to Tunis

I arrived in Tunis just after the army had prevented a third Casbah sit-in, aimed at extracting fundamental democratic reforms from the third government, under the octogenarian Sebsi.

The movement was in something of a lull, but there were tanks and razorwire all over the city centre, periodic clashes with the police, and new graffiti appearing every day: "Down with repression"; "The women of Tunisia are free"; "Down with Sebsi"; "Secularism"; "Free at last".

The revolutionary movement in Tunisia is still ongoing. Despite the fact that press freedom has not yet been fully won, the Tunisian press carried stories every day of strikes in the interior of the country. There were large street meetings and demonstrations in the city centre most days.

Since 14 January, there have been three governments. The first two, under Ghannouchi, were brought down by sit-ins in the Casbah, the square in front of the governmental palace.

I'd come to Tunis mainly to find out what Tunisian revolutionary socialists are doing and saying.

The recent history of Trotskyism in Tunisia goes back to the mid-1980s, when a group called the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (OCR) was founded as a section

of the Fourth International (the international network clustered around the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France).

The group was made up of young workers and intellectuals. The foundation of the OCR took place in the context of the implementation of the IMF's Structural Adjustment Programme, an assault on working class living standards which was the spark for bread riots in 1984.

The IMF programme came with a higher level of political repression, orchestrated by the new President Ben Ali; he created a police state. The OCR had to start operating underground. For a period, they produced a newspaper, *Al-Chararam (The Spark)*; their militants went to work in different sectors of industry, and organised dissident cultural milieux, and oppositional political associations.

In 1992, 40 comrades were arrested and tried. The group was able to continue its activity, but some were jailed, and others were forced to live underground.

In the midst of the revolution of January 2011, the comrades organised a re-groupment, launching a new organisation, the Workers' Left League (LGO).

The LGO bases itself around the need to push the revolution forward to working-class power, but it is broader in its make-up than the old OCR.

Its political basis will be clarified when it has its first conference this spring.

Timeline

17 December 2010: Mohammed Bouazizi burns himself to death in protest against police harassment of his work selling fruit and vegetables. This sparks waves of protest across Tunisia.

14 January 2011: President Ben Ali flees the country. His prime minister, Mohammed Ghannouchi, declares he will take over as interim president. Tunisia's constitutional court rules that the speaker of parliament must be interim president, but Ghannouchi continues as prime minister and forms a new coalition government including many figures from the RCD (Ben Ali's party) and the old regime.

17 January: Ghannouchi promises wide reforms, press freedom, the release of political prisoners.

20 January: All the ministers in the interim government quit Ben Ali's RCD party; the central committee of RCD is dissolved.

21-26 January: Demonstrations in the old city, or casbah, of Tunis, and strikes elsewhere by the UGTT union, demand the new government be dissolved. Ghannouchi replaces 12 ministers, but remains prime minister.

7 February: RCD officially "suspended".

11 February: Creation of "National Council for the Safeguarding of the Revolution", involving the UGTT and all the left groups.

24-27 February: New demonstrations to demand Ghannouchi go. He resigns on 27 February, and Beji Caid-Es-sebsi becomes prime minister.

3 March: Government announces that elections for a Constituent Assembly will be held on 24 July.

17 March: "Higher Committee for the Realisation of the Objectives of the Revolution" (ISPLROR), set up by government with participation of the UGTT and the left, holds its first meeting.

A view of Bahrain

By Sayed

People in Bahrain are expecting the worst every moment. The military crackdown on protesters led by Saudi troops has unleashed an ugly racist face.

Bahrain was always a liberal country and the ruling regime itself is a secular tribe. But as a tribe, it had a problem with equality and justice. Other citizens, not in tribes, found themselves lost as they were treated as second or third class citizens.

The ruling regime has always monopolised the nation's natural resources and wealth — citizens who founded Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) and other companies found themselves deprived of their real rights.

It was no surprise that Bahrainis were one of the first to rise against their regime. They maintained a peaceful tone throughout; but what happens when Bahrain becomes a Saudi protectorate?

RACISM

Bahrainis are made up of four main ethnicities: Baharna (Arab Shia 60%), Howala (Iranian Sunnis 20%), Ajam (Iranian Shias 10%) and finally tribes (Arab Sunnis 10%).

In the aftermath of the crackdown, the military led governmental bodies have stepped towards discrimination against Shias of Arab and Iranian ethnicities. It's clear that the Saudi troops want to pull Bahraini people towards a sectarian swamp where hatred predominates.

In one interview on a Wahabi TV channel a Saudi general said: "It's our land, we the Sunnis, no place here for Christians, Jews or Majoos." (Majoos is an old religion which was prominent in Iran before Islam spread. Some sectarian people use the word Majoos to derogate Shias and link them with Iran). These chants can result in a call to ethnically cleanse Shias.

MEDIA

Bahrain TV (BTV) and Facebook regime pages have broadcast about protesters describing them as traitors. On BTV, the names and pictures of protesters were broadcasted before arrests. 112 teachers and school staff were sacked.

The prime minister has explained, "We won't forgive anyone any more, no matter how many apologies they present". Nooh Najaf, the captain of Bahrain's national basketball team, was investigated on BTV, and then arrested. To everyone's surprise he had his Bahraini nationality withdrawn! The regime is so desperate it will lead a land with no national citizens!

PRISONS

In recent weeks four detainees passed away in prison with their corpses covered in bruises and evidence of torture. The Home Office has always denied any torture or sometimes the imprisonment of prisoners until deaths are announced.

Among the prisoners are 14 women.

Interestingly, 12 hospital doctors were arrested for being active and helping injured people, when the casualties couldn't reach the hospital without being stopped and investigated at the hospital entrance.

STUDENTS

As many as 90 Bahraini students abroad are not safe from Bahrain's regime. They had their funding to universities stopped because some evidence shows they supported calls for reforms and democracy!

The verdict has been already announced; they are all plotting with Iran against Bahrain's regime! Iran seemed to be a good enough excuse to excuse all the anti-human acts led by Saudi troops.

Without Saudi army troops, the Bahraini regime couldn't get back any control over Bahrain. Yet the question remains whether the Bahraini regime could make a deal with any opposition party or group. There is a huge political gap that couldn't be filled even by opportunistic parties or people.

The ethnic cleansing that is currently going on will result in a civil war in future, even without the army being part of it.

The government's

Majid Hannachi, a member of the Gauche Indépendante, a group of critical ex-members of the Communist Party of Tunisia, and Osama, a member of the Workers' Left League (LGO), spoke to Ed Maltby

Majid: The Tunisian revolution was not guided by a political party or leadership. It was spontaneous.

There are advantages in its spontaneity and its not being organised through parties, but there is the problem that it leaves the ruling regime with great room for manoeuvre in order to reorganise, keep hold of power, and "save the furniture". That is what the regime is doing now.

The counterrevolutionary forces are sufficiently organised to usurp and steal the revolution. The governments put in place since 14 January have all had one common origin — the RCD and the state apparatus in the hands of the political class.

But, very quickly, the two Ghannouchi governments and the new Sebsi government were put to a harsh test, of popular revolutionary demands, driven by a massive popular determination. The masses demanded the dissolution of the RCD. They rejected the nomination of high-level administrators. They demanded the dissolution of the secret police. They demanded more freedom of association and more media freedom.

Finally, they demanded the creation of the the Constituent Assembly, which summarises the whole programme of demands, and which will create the constitution. At the same time the social demands of the movement — jobs, pay, conditions, and regional development, show the substance and the content of the revolution.

Successive provisional governments have continued to manoeuvre to grant demands in form, but not in content. They grant demands in a way that allows them to wriggle back.

At the beginning the revolutionary movement had a spontaneous character, independent of all the political parties. The first reaction to the Ghannouchi government was the first Casbah sit-in. At that first sit-in, the protesters who camped in front of the governmental palace refused even to discuss with political militants who were trying to get debates going.

The second sit-in had a better communication between the militants and the masses. It was at that moment that the slogan of the Constituent Assembly was first seriously raised.

On 25 February, a historic date, there were 200,000 protesters with those two slogans: the fall of the second Ghannouchi government and the Constituent Assembly. That is to say that between the two sit-ins there was a great political advance made by the masses. This did not happen by a

happy accident: it was the result of the better inroads made into the movement by the political parties.

There was a gap between the movement and the parties: has it been fully bridged? I still think we are not at that level yet, there remains much to do.

The revolutionaries of my generation must renew themselves and address the youth and bring them to place themselves in political organisations, in order to take charge of their destiny.

The question of regional development is not fully understood. Many people think it's just a question of a better balance between regions. But it is more complex than that, it is an issue that binds up political, economic, cultural, scientific and historical questions.

We must have regional power, so that those regions which were the home of the revolution can impose changes — not demand or beg for them, but actually impose them. They need real power to do that.

The separation of powers and the spirit of democracy do not just mean the separation of power between the legislative and executive branches: it means a separation of powers between the centre and the regions. For example: on some issues, in France, local mayors have more say than ministers in Paris. This must be addressed in the leftwing political parties' programmes.

The Constituent Assembly must look at all the laws relating to questions of political democracy, social democracy and separation of powers. The debates in the Constituent Assembly must be rich and profound. They are decisive!

That is why we are launching an unprecedented mobilisation for the elections and it is why we are calling for the elections to be moved back so we can have a real debate, not a parody of a debate, on the most crucial questions relating to the fruits of the 14 January revolution.

COUNCILS

The creation of Councils to Safeguard the Revolution was at the outset an almost spontaneous initiative. Immediately after 14 January the old regime started organising terror and sabotage.

Inhabitants of working-class neighbourhoods armed themselves and got organised in order to defend their streets and lives and their revolution. Men and women, young and old, acted as one body, took up arms and formed committees. It took hold among the youth and the trade unionists.

These Councils to Safeguard the Revolution (CSRs) were set up in every region and crowned by the creation of the National Council to Safeguard the Revolution (SCSR). The National Council was an initiative of the UGTT, the Front of 14

Fundamentalist threat

Mounjia Hadfi, a women's rights activist and Marxist based in Tunis, spoke to Ed Maltby

Under the dictatorship, and today, we see patriarchal attitudes every day. Part of that has to do with our culture here in Tunisia, even in spite of our legal victories such as the banning of polygamy in 1950 and laws guaranteeing the right to abortion and so on, which were passed in the 1970s as part of the population planning policy.

But sexist mentalities and oppression persist. Many women have even internalised these attitudes! We must unveil all the forms of oppression and all the sexist attitudes which exist.

We see political and economic violence against women. Unemployment is one such form — and the criminalisation of poverty. And the feminisation of poverty.

Poverty has a woman's face. Why? Because of their precarious status. In underdeveloped countries women are not protected by laws which could guarantee a level of quality of life. So since the business closures came in 2000 the crushing majority of victims have been women.

Women are discriminated against in the realm of inheritance law.

Also, after 14 January we have seen a huge expansion in the political presence and confidence of fundamentalist groups. We are fighting for a secular constitution but they are making it harder. You see these groups in the street and they have absolutely no political programme to offer — except on the question of whether or not the constitution should be secular!

So we must fight for secularism and democracy. In the elections for the Constituent Assembly, we must guard against any drift — away from secularism but also away from rights which we have already won. The old RCDists who are re-organising are not the only counter-revolutionaries. There are also the fundamentalists, even through they fake and claim to be for the revolution and human rights. This will be a great battle and we need all the democratic forces to take part.

The struggle goes on. We need a constitution to protect our rights. Patriarchal attitudes are deeply rooted and have grown up with capitalism, which is why patriarchal politics and pro-capitalist politics go so closely together. It will be a long fight — and for me, the fight against sexist oppression has to be a fight against capitalism.

s manoeuvres

The army is still a presence on the streets

January, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and pro-revolutionary lawyers. The idea was that a provisional government would emerge from that council. That posed the problem of power.

The government started to manoeuvre to supplant the National Council with a parachuted-in committee. There were many protests, but in the end it was created, this spectral committee [the Higher Committee, ISPLROR]. This committee was charged with preparing the electoral law to set up elections to the Constituent Assembly and in a formal sense to supervise the provisional government.

We are struggling in part against the legitimacy of this committee, and seeking to re-establish the legitimacy of the National Council and its project of a government based on consensus, in order to provide a more legitimate basis and conditions for elections to the Constituent Assembly.

When I say “a government based on consensus”, obviously pro-RCD and obsolete, counter-revolutionary parties would be excluded from that consensus.

The National Council is composed of the UGTT (trade union federation), the 14 January Front, and local and regional delegates from local and regional CSRs — but FIDH, Ennahda [the main Islamist group] and some other liberal parties have left the SCSR to join the government’s committee [and many parties are represented in both].

SURPRISE

For 200 years, thinkers have talked about the “Arab exception”. That means that at a time when democracy exists in many countries, self-determination of nations and so on, including in many countries which are similar to the Arab world, such as for example Latin America, the Arab world has stood apart, under dictatorships, despotisms, totalitarian and even theocratic regimes.

It has been a black period in the Arab world. Pro-democracy forces had lost the historical initiative. People counselled despair, saying the Arab world was out of history and only possibly foreign intervention could shake things up. Well: history has surprised everyone!

Osama: We cannot dissociate these movements in the Arab world from the economic crisis of neo-liberalism. I think that in dictatorial countries in the world, neo-liberalism shows us its most atrocious face. So, see for example, here and in China too. I think the revolutionary wave will have echoes elsewhere in Africa and Asia as well as the Arab world. Those places where neo-liberalism expresses itself in the most atrocious forms cannot remain in place in the face of these movements.

Majid: The precise terminology used is “voyoocracy” — mafia states. These revolutions have laid bare the mafia practices of Mubarak, Ben Ali. It’s not just neo-liberalism, it’s also their mafia system.

Osama: A few years ago, George W Bush said approvingly of China that it was an exemplary vision of neo-liberalism working perfectly.

Majid: From this wave I do not exclude the industrialised countries, which globalisation has made interdependent — economically but also on the level of information — with the rest of the world. A greater level of communication between the oppressed is the result of the information revolution.

It is not out of the question that the exploited classes will make a chain reaction. For example, Sarkozy was very clearly the accomplice of Ben Ali. It is such links that create an interdependence of oppressed classes.

From these revolutions and these links, we can conclude more firmly than ever before that society revolves around the struggle of class against class and not of nation against nation.

Art in revolution

Atef Ben Hassine, a stage and cinema actor in Tunisia, spoke to Ed Maltby

My new play, “Intox”, is split up into two parts. The first part is set before the revolution and the second part is about our fears for the future of the revolution.

We’re afraid of the revolution being derailed and turned back into the old regime. We don’t trust the old regime. In the play, we put a president in place who is a famous public figure, his face is in all the primers in the schools: “Abi [papa] Mabrouk”. The point is, we should refuse a president who is a “father to the people” — we should just have a President who is employed by the state. We don’t want a father: that is the essential message of the play.

Under Ben Ali, there were two types of art: official art, empty and tacky; and another art, unofficial, under censorship. But in the theatre, we were cleverer than the censor: we had ways of expressing ideas that the censor could not understand.

We would treat social themes — the problem of theatre was the problem of the citizen in Tunisia. We couldn’t talk about politics. But we could put on productions which spoke about social conditions.

Plays were not eliminated, but it worked like this: the state was both producer and distributor. When you were censored, your play didn’t get bought. But that doesn’t mean your play was banned. They didn’t directly ban plays.

Will censorship continue? Let’s say that this latest play is the first time I have performed without having to go before the “commission” and obtain a “visa”.

The revolution has opened horizons. It’s a question of what’s in people’s heads. The thing with this freedom is that we now have to educate Tunisians to be free and accept difference: it’s a matter of democratic culture. I believe artists are responsible for educating people in accepting new ideas. We must see the importance of the artist if we want to really teach people to speak freely.

Regime theatre was very populist. There was no message, political or social, it was empty. Just jokes, no substance, nothing noble. It was grotesque — but malformed, there is at least art in the grotesque but there was none here. It was boudouro — real cheap.

There is no theatre in the working-class neighbourhoods. We have not had that experience. It is something we have dreamed of, a people’s theatre, but it hasn’t happened. If I went now and did a play in a working-class neighbourhood, got dressed up, it would turn people’s heads around: and the state did not like the thought of that. It would be great to see an infrastructure which would allow theatre in these neighbourhoods — but that takes preparation and resources.

What you see in the streets in the way of popular culture is music, because it’s easier for a musician to just come up and play in the street. If I went into a café now and put on a spectacle, people wouldn’t accept it.

We talk a lot about the social and political aspect of the revolution — work, money, dignity. That’s true. But we must not forget the cultural aspect. If we want to win this revolution, it will come via ideas, via people’s heads. That’s the role of art and artists.

I teach theatre, and teaching to think differently is part of that work for me. We must educate people, and theatre, art is a part of that.

More on AWL website

Interview with Jalel Ben Brik Zoghliami, Ligue de la Gauche Ouvrière (Workers’ Left League/LGO)

<http://alturl.com/rzhuj>

“The women of Tunisia are free”

Keeping your head



Dave Osler

Critics often accuse revolutionary socialists of being “out of touch with reality”. Usually, what they mean is something like “well to the left of Brendan Barber”. But let me offer a sobering thought to anybody who locates themselves in the Marxist political tradition: the claim isn’t always wrong, is it?

Some of the more celebrated idiocies have passed into leftie folklore. There have been Trotskyist sects who believed that flying saucers were emissaries of Bolshevik civilisations on other planets, that the Second World War did not “really” end in 1945, that the USSR should have strengthened proletarian property relations by launching an all-out nuclear first strike on the West, or that the world was in for centuries of degenerated workers’ states.

I have even heard rumours that one sizeable bunch of British Trots was once crazy enough to insist that Respect was a viable electoral project. Personally, I would discount that one — it strikes me as just too far-fetched to be believable.

There is also a wide range of slightly less fantastic misapprehensions. There are plenty of cases where two or three people have declared themselves to be a boldly-named “group” or “league”.

That’s understandable from a marketing perspective, I suppose. A more accurate description, such as “Johnny and his Revolutionary Marxist Trio”, would make them sound like some ghastly semi-professional club turn featuring keyboards, bass and drums.

Outfits with a few dozen adherents, if that, describe themselves “the party of October” in direct apostolic succession to Lenin himself. They routinely call for general strikes and the building of soviets every couple of weeks or so, raise the slogan of “a workers’ and farmers’ government” in Britain, and hope to see Qaddafi win the current conflict in Libya. Sorry, but these are not the actions of sane people.

I say all this not to disparage hard-working activists, but in genuine bewilderment that anybody basing themselves on an intrinsically rational problematic such as Marxism can actually end up reaching patently whacky conclusions.

After all, the vast majority of Trots are clearly not stupid. Sometimes they have impressive academic qualifications from elite universities, and almost always the walls of their homes are lined with books.

However endearing some of their foibles look to others on the left, they can also be seen as collective delusions that would in other contexts be indicative of mental health concerns.

The alarming thing is that even the most extreme positions are reached, step by step, starting from a belief system that I broadly share, and culminating in Unidentified Flying Object spotting and revolutionary socialists forming alliances with the religious right.

One partial explanation is that Marxism explicitly postulates a difference between things as they appear, and things as they really are. This is a recurrent theme in Marx’s writings, from his analysis of alienation in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to his description of commodity fetishism in *Capital*.

Arguing that there is a divergence between essence and appearance has been a mainstream position in western thought, from Plato onwards. To reject this stance is to reject some of the central tenets of Marxism, and I am not questioning its validity.

But the obvious danger is that the way is open for all manner of preposterous charlatans and self-proclaimed dialecticians to present all sorts of gobbledegook as the Marxist truth, brushing aside obvious objections by dismissing the questioner’s lack of Marxist understanding.

To point out that collapse into cultdom is always an inherent risk for small Marxist tendencies is not the same as arguing that it must inevitably happen. It is instead to insist on the need for constant reality checks on small group leaderships, based on scrutiny from politically worked-out rank and file comrades capable of recognising bullshit when they see it.

Either that, or maybe those Bolshevik aliens could do us all a favour and abduct the central committees of Trot outfits that have absolutely lost the plot.

Bamberry quits SWP



The left

By Tom Unterrainer

On 10 April, long-time leading member Chris Bamberry resigned from the Socialist Workers Party, complaining about “factionalism”. Chris Bamberry has been secretary of the SWP’s front anti-cuts campaign, Right to Work. On 12 April, 38 Scottish SWP members followed. Tom Unterrainer analyses the background.

According to Chris Bamberry there is a “cancer eating away” at the SWP’s “heart”. The name of this cancer is “factionalism”.

This claim is repeated in a joint letter of resignation signed by a significant number of SWP members in Glasgow.

Bamberry claims that the “party has been afflicted by factionalism for four years and grips the leading group on the CC [Central Committee] who seem addicted to it.”

The “factionalism” found expression at a recent meeting where Bamberry’s fellow CC member Martin Smith variously described him as having played a “filthy”, “disgraceful” and “foul” role within the party. Along with the vast majority of SWP members, we have no idea if this is a fair summary of his recent activity.

His robust treatment at the hands of the leading committee of the SWP — including the abusive language — should not encourage any pity for the man. Bamberry has all the charm and savoir faire of a sledge hammer and meted out similar invective to SWP members when serving as National Secretary over many years.

Nevertheless, and like John Rees and Lindsey German before him, Bamberry has taken a sizeable number out of the organisation with him. All indications suggest that this grouping will now join Rees’s and German’s Counterfire organisation.

Once again the political lines forcing an SWP split are far from clear. Very little of political significance is revealed in the statements from either Bamberry or the Scottish comrades who left with him.

FACTIONALISM

Any organisation in which democratic accountability and debate is suffocated and preserved for a small, self-selecting and self-reproducing “elite” is liable to undisciplined factionalism. The risk is even greater when the only democratic tradition in the organisation is the systematic suppression of democracy.

Factionalism in and of itself is not necessarily an unhealthy or destructive feature of revolutionary organisations. In normal democratically functioning groups, members have the right, and even, where there are sharp disagreements beyond the usual, the duty, to form factions. Where no such democratic norms function, the only feasible routes for dissenters is to remain quiet or leave the organisation — en masse or individually.

In response to the resignations of Bamberry and company, the leadership have accused him of failing to follow “tradition” in his refusal to mount a political fight at the National Committee and among the members.

They’re right, aren’t they? Well, only up to a point. One of the most revealing things about the “debate” in the SWP is the distinct lack of written polemic and clear differentiation from either side.

For sure there are reams of articles from the pages of *Socialist Worker*, the party magazine and journal spelling out “how they see things”. None of it is related to the specific issues resulting in the “factionalising” of the party.

Likewise, documents produced by the party leadership in the run-up to conferences throughout the “four years of factionalising” have contained not a single substantial theoretical contribution explaining or analysing the differences.

Search the website of the Counterfire organisation and there’s really nothing explaining where they came from and why they’re no longer in the SWP.

These features make clear not just an unwillingness but an inability to coherently articulate the political differences.

So why the inability to explain? Could it really be the case that there are no real differences? Or is it the case that an organisation which strives to suppress real debate and discussion cannot do other than crush the ability to theorise and explain political differences and ideas?

The few political morsels in the letters from Bamberry and the Scottish group indicate a continued dissatisfaction with the organisational direction taken by the SWP in recent years.

Since Bamberry’s removal from the position of National Secretary and the subsequent reign of first Martin Smith — who was himself removed from the post under a cloud — and then Charlie Kimber, the SWP has taken a turn towards “party building”.

One would expect “party building” (i.e. recruitment and the “promotion” of revolutionary ideas) to be part-and-parcel of any normal revolutionary organisation’s functioning. Not so for the SWP, it seems. First Rees and German and now Bamberry and the Scottish group have accused the current Party leadership of abandoning the “successful” model of “united front work”, tried and tested through the zenith of Stop the War and Respect, in favour of blunt and inward looking recruitment exercises.

ANTI-CUTS

Accordingly — so the criticism runs — the party has neglected anti-cuts work, instead intervening from the outside at local and national anti-cuts events and initiatives.

But from close observation and first-hand experience, one of the few admirable qualities possessed by each and every active SWP member is their tenacity when it comes to recruitment. No opportunity is wasted to sell the paper or wave the recruitment form. This is good and normal practice for revolutionary socialists and especially in a period of relative upturn in political activity in the working class. The differences, then, do not arise from a new found distaste for or opposition to rigorous recruitment.

The problem, it seems, is that the SWP has accentuated “party building” as an abstract exercise to cover an inability to present a coherent strategy or to cohere and dominate an anti-cuts “united front” around itself. It took a swift initiative in setting up the Right to Work campaign, but the tried-and-tested front building model embodied in the Stop the War Coalition was soon overtaken by real initiatives by working class organisations and working class communities the length-and-breadth of the country. Surprisingly enough — for the SWP at least — most of these trade union backed, democratic and accountable local groups saw no reason to affiliate to a SWP front group.

Worse still for the SWP was the initiative taken by former SWP leaders in Counterfire who managed to set up a slightly more attractive looking and more successful front group of their own — the Coalition of Resistance.

What this amounts to is yet another clear demonstration of the wrongness of SWP “theory” around the issues of party, class and united fronts. The bottom line for the SWP is the interest of the party itself, which they substitute for the real labour movement and working class organisations. As such, they insist on organisationally dominating what they call “united fronts” and dilute working class politics out of the equation in order to pose as the “left” within a large, populist grouping.

Real united fronts are combinations of working class organisations which unite the various wings of the movement and do so democratically. Within these united fronts, revolutionaries democratically and vigorously battle for *political* leadership — the “leadership” is not granted in advance.

WHAT NEXT?

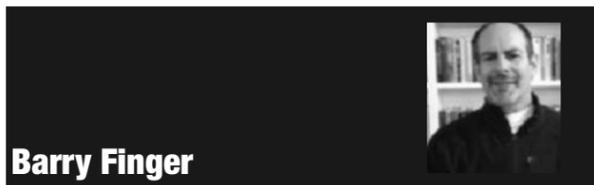
By any account, the SWP is a much diminished organisation. According to Bamberry’s letter, there is now only one person on the leadership body with any significant history in the group — Alex Callinicos. With Bamberry, the SWP has lost a leading comrade who — whatever his personal qualities — is a proven political force. There is no clear direction from the leadership, other than a new call to “build for June 30” when united national strike action is likely in some public sector unions. The SWP is politically and organisationally adrift, and there is no-one and no group of people set to turn this situation around.

This much is clear: there has been no promised democratic renewal in the SWP and ordinary party members are unable to express dissent or be organised into a democratic minority. As long as the SWP continues to function in such a way, it will be susceptible to more such defections.

If, as some have suggested, Bamberry remained in the SWP after the previous round of resignations in order to carry through another damaging split at a later date, this speaks of a majority of the leadership who are — to put it bluntly — politically witless.

Witless not because they failed to “deal with” Bamberry and his activity bureaucratically, but because they had neither the wit, ideas or organisational will to conduct a thorough and open political counter-attack. Such facts cannot be anything other than discouraging for the majority of SWP members.

Libya and the no-fly zone: precedents for socialists



Barry Finger

The basic issue for socialists in confronting the Libyan situation is this: we wish Qaddafi to be defeated, but we are not indifferent to who defeats him. That is because who defeats Qaddafi involves how the regime is brought down and the consequences of that downfall. We are not in support of capitalist imperialism being the agent of that defeat, even though almost any conceivable regime that replaces Qaddafi would most likely be a “lesser evil” to this, one of the world’s most horrific police states.

It follows that any alternative that imperialism would summarily impose on the Libyan people would subordinate the ability of that nation to fully exercise their freedom to develop to the needs of capitalist accumulation. That is also why we refuse to endorse any imperialist lashup, such as resulted in Iraq or Afghanistan or which imperialists may be cooking up for Iran. The regimes in question were obscene, but we cannot condone actions which would replace one exploiter with another under the guise of “promoting democracy” or “humanitarian interests.” We do not, in more general terms, recognize — much less endorse — the moral or political legitimacy of one set of exploiters and oppressors to selectively displace another under whatever clever packaging imperialists currently employ to market their ambitions.

How then do we apply these principles to a situation in which freedom fighters, heavily outgunned and struggling simply to survive, ask — in desperation — for a limited imperialist intervention on an “enemy of my enemy” basis, as opposed to offering a quid pro quo? How do we distinguish our response when imperialists are asked by a legitimate leadership group for limited assistance from those unilateral interventions in which these same imperialists simply arrogate to themselves the unquestioned right to impose their will, unchecked and unqualified, by a legitimate oppositional democratic force?

Historically, socialists have distinguished between calling upon their own capitalist governments to give arms and aid to insurgencies that we support and the right of these insurgencies to arm themselves through whatever channels they can establish, even with imperialist powers. We reject the first alternative because it entails taking responsibility for involving imperialism in the conflict. Were we to do that, we would also have to accede in how imperialism chooses to provide this aid and to accept as legitimate the advantages imperialism seeks to attain through its involvement.

Conversely, we accept the latter proposition in deference to the unchallenged right of all embattled democratic forces — including those fighting under authoritarian or bourgeois leaderships whose victory nevertheless does not foreclose broader democratic openings — to seek an edge wherever they can find it.

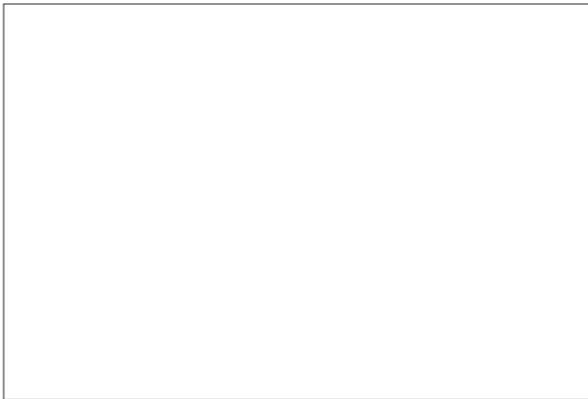
IRISH REBELS

The Irish rebels of 1916, according to third camp lore, accepted aid from German imperialism. If that were true, no revolutionist would have questioned the right of the Irish rebels to accept such arms, which the German government offered for its own reasons.

That is, it would have been unchallenged as long as no strings were attached. Needless to say, this did not mean that Liebknecht and Luxemburg were called upon to request this aid from the Kaiser. The point is not our attitude towards the revolution, but our attitude toward our own imperialist government. We cannot raise demands that we cannot support.

Along these lines, American socialists supported the call to lift the arms embargo on the Spanish loyalists during the civil war, while refusing to ask our government to send arms to the republicans.

The capitalist democracies famously refused to answer the call from the Spanish democracy. Had they done so, the capitalists would have been free to choose who among the rebels to privilege, what arms to furnish, the schedule of deliveries they would adhere to, as well as the political terms



Misrata, western Libya, under siege from Qaddafi's forces

around which they were willing to premise their aid. Needless to say, we socialists would have advised the revolutionists, that unless they — like the Irish rebels of 1916 — could accept such aid as democratic imperialism was willing to offer without making a political deal in exchange, they would have our full support.

But what if an insurgency is unable to satisfy these terms? How then would we gauge our response? What if “an enemy of our enemy” basis is insufficient and imperialism seeks concrete concessions, or seeks to shape outcomes or exploits openings to burnish its image?

This is the crux of our dilemma with the Libyan situation. Up until now we have been successfully spared this conundrum. But that is also our problem. There are no obvious historical precedents to guide us, no historical lessons upon which we can draw. The imperial powers stated, in essence, that they would not release Qaddafi’s funds to the rebels, nor would they relax the arms embargo to the advantage of the democrats. They refused, in effect, to engage the rebels on an “enemy of our enemy” basis.

LEFT RESPONSES

What have been left responses? Among anti-imperialist fundamentalists, Western aid in the form of direct military intervention at any level, either clarifies or redefines the dynamic.

For that camp, it is Qaddafi who is seen as fighting an anti-imperialist war. And it is very difficult to understand why this conclusion would have been markedly different had imperialism simply lifted the embargo and either armed or allowed the insurgency to arm itself. It is not the nature of the intervention but the fact of intervention that is crucial to this position.

There are those who actively politicking for Qaddafi as a genuine face of Arab independence and dignity and those who, recognize the repugnant nature of the regime and would extend military, but not political support to the Libyan police state.

A somewhat weaker response along the same lines is the assertion that socialists no longer have a stake in this fight. Neither side, they argue, can any longer be relied upon to advance interests aligned to the needs of the Libyan people.

All factions of this anti-imperialist fundamentalism would raise the demand for an immediate halt to the imperialist intervention.

These responses are distant enough from the traditions of third camp socialism as to not require any extended response here. This is not to claim that there are no self-identified third campists who lobby for these positions; only that they are no longer arguing within a tradition that we clearly recognize as our own.

More pertinent are those who do not withhold their support for the insurgency, but would also, and above all else, actively intervene to demand an immediate halt to the imperialist enforced no fly zone. They have balled themselves into a knot, insisting incoherently that actions which would cleanse the perceived political stain from the rebels, that restores their unchallenged revolutionary “agency” — even if it results in their certain demise — is an act, not of treachery, but of unvarnished even unparalleled solidarity.

I think there is no escaping the conclusion that more crucial than the success of the rebels, from this vantage, is denying imperialism a platform to influence outcomes or repackage its image.

Perhaps I am being overly generous here. Most of those who make the demand to halt the bombings, but who also claim to support the rebels, have not spelled out why precisely they find one form of imperial intervention and intrusion acceptable — the delivery of arms, while condemning another — the no fly zone.

Both forms of intervention are limited. They do not involve an imperialist invasion and the displacement of the rebels to auxiliary status. It is still the rebels who are doing the fighting and dying. The distinction is therefore only rational under the unspoken assumption, unwarranted on its face, that an elimination of the arms embargo alone would have signaled a “no strings attached” policy, while the NFZ is indicative of something else entirely.

They have in any case confused themselves with the rebels. Socialists, having complete distrust in the motivations and designs of this intervention, did not call for a no fly zone and did not ask the imperialists to intervene. They are not implicated by the fact that an insurgency that they support did. They — and by that I mean, we — are similarly under no political obligation to call an immediate halt to activities that we did not call for, but which as things now stand permit the rebels to regroup, to consolidate and to extend their national alliances. And this is doubly so, if we have no viable alternative to offer.

ARMS EMBARGO

We would not of necessity call a halt to the delivery of arms if the embargo had been lifted and imperialism had exercised its leverage through means of extortion on that basis, as it might equally have. And we need not do so now.

The rebels have opened the door to the imperialists to shape the conflict, but not wide enough to determine and dictate the outcome. If we accept that proposition, as I do, then we are under no obligation to politically sabotage actions, from whatever source, that may permit the rebels a slim chance of military victory, and therefore, the hope for democracy. If we do not accept that proposition, if we believe that imperialism is now in complete control, we have no further justification for continuing to support the rebellion. Political choices seldom conveniently present themselves in black and white. It is through the murky grayness that we have to feel our way to creative alternatives.

That does not compel us to deny the real dangers that victory under such circumstances portends. This may be uncharted territory, but it is also the terrain in which the issue of revolutionary solidarity — of socialist internationalism — is decisive. We need, first, to forthrightly denounce the pretensions under which this intervention was undertaken. We must be clear that it has nothing to do with humanitarian interests and everything to do with establishing some level of imperialist credibility with the Arab masses in revolt.

Beyond that, it is our duty to proclaim that any concessions made to imperialism in exchange for the no fly zone, were made under duress and cannot be seen as a binding quid pro quo on any future Libyan government. We will do our best to expose these conditions as we become aware of them and will fight along with honest Libyan democrats and socialists to nullify them. If economic concessions were demanded, we will fight our ruling class, with whatever meager political resources we can muster, to annul them. If political concessions in the form of future alliances or military bases are expected, we will dedicate our assistance in breaking them. If imperialism seeks to raise the Karzais and the Chalabis from the nether ranks of the insurgency and impose them on the Libyan nation, we will mount a campaign to expose this for the democratic fraud it is and mobilize domestic and international opinion against it.

What I advocate here is that socialists show our support for the Libyan insurgency by actively fighting for the conditions under which a democratic foreign policy can be domestically understood and raise these issues in a way that clearly distinguished our position from the simple isolationism and the confused anti-imperialism of the “halt the bombings now” stripe.

The many sides of Malcolm X

Manning Marable, US academic and longstanding member of Democratic Socialists of America, died on 1 April, three days before the release of his book *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. Dan Katz looks at Marable's account.

Malcolm X was gunned down by former comrades of the Nation of Islam (NoI) on 21 February 1965, aged 39.

When Malcolm died, his murder made headlines across the world. In the US he divided opinion sharply: for the majority he represented a threat of black violence and retribution; for a many black activists he was an intransigent, unbending opponent of white supremacy and advocate of black pride. Having been pushed out of the NoI a year previously, and beginning to turn his back on the NoI's rigid black separatism, Malcolm X also died in a state of ideological flux. This political and religious uncertainty and development at the end of his life has allowed many competing organisations — from Trotskyist groups to orthodox Sunni Muslims — to attempt to claim Malcolm X's legacy.

Manning Marable's aim was to present a rounded picture of Malcolm's life and his "reinventions" of himself. In particular, he argues that Malcolm's image and legacy has been shaped (and distorted) by his widely-read *Autobiography*, which was in fact written by Alex Haley (who was later to write the enormously popular TV series *Roots*). Marable argues that Haley — a Republican — had his own agenda, and had little interest in presenting a clear account of Malcolm's views in the final year of his life. Haley wrote the concluding section of the *Autobiography* after Malcolm's death.

GARVEY

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, on 19 April 1925.

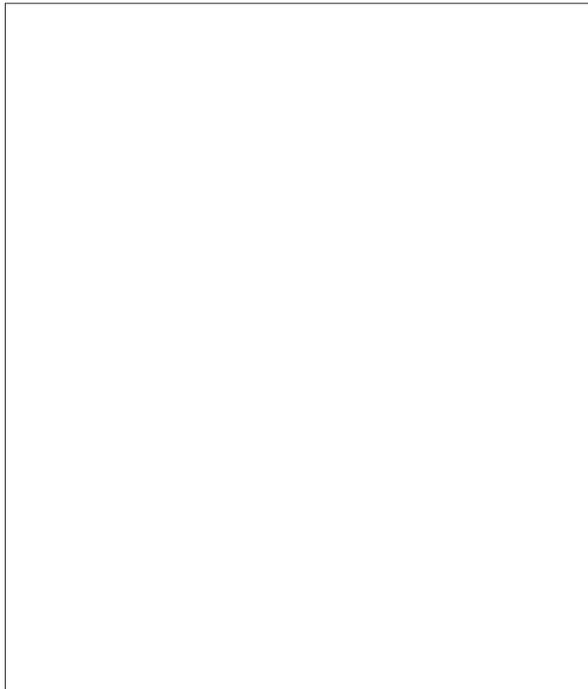
His father and mother, Earl and Louise, were militant supporters of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey built a mass movement by appealing to the black workers and poor. His message was black pride, self-improvement and racial separation, seeing the struggle of black people in the US as being bound up with the fight against white colonialism in Africa. Garvey was also enthusiastically pro-capitalist.

The more conservative elements of Garvey's programme built directly on the previous work of leaders like Booker T Washington, and represented a series of concessions to white racism and acceptance of it. However in the US another distinct tradition had emerged: integrationism. Among the black middle class this current was represented by W E B DuBois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This divide — between those that fought for equal rights for black people in the US, and those that effectively accepted the inevitability of white hostility and sought to escape the US — would remain the key to understanding Malcolm X's political choices and development.

By the mid-40s Malcolm was drifting and became involved in petty crime and drug use.

His gang was rounded up after committing a series of robberies. In 1946 he got a long sentence, probably because his associates included white women. He began his sentence in the notorious Charlestown State prison.

According to Marable the version of Malcolm's conversion to the NoI that appears in, for example, Spike Lee's 1993 film of Malcolm's life is inaccurate. Marable states that the pressure to join the sect came from family members. What the family found in the NoI sounded similar to their father's Garveyite Christianity: a message of black separatism, self-reliance and a black god. Malcolm's brother, Wilfred, later recalled: "We had already been indoctrinated



Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X

with Marcus Garvey's philosophy... they didn't have to convince us we were black and should be proud..."

What is clear is that Malcolm converted to the strange black sect — whose beliefs included that the white race had been created by an evil black scientist called Yacub — and when he left jail, in August 1952, he gave more and more of his time to building the NoI.

At the end of 1953 the group's leader, Elijah Muhammad, made Malcolm X, as he was now known, a minister and assigned him the task of building a temple in Boston. He proved to be a highly effective organiser and speaker, and in June 1954 he was assigned to build up Temple No. 7 in Harlem, New York. At this time the NoI had less than 1000 supporters, and Temple No. 7 was badly run with less than a few dozen members.

Malcolm found it difficult to make progress in Harlem. The area — the cultural and political centre of black America — was not receptive to the NoI's anti-political message. The NoI opposed its members registering to vote or being involved in campaigning on political matters.

The Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott of 1955-6 pushed the civil rights movement demanding black equality to the centre of American politics. In fact the pressure for this political explosion had been building for some time (as detailed, for example, by Marable in his excellent *Race, Reform and Rebellion*) and produced a white backlash.

The NoI began to grow quickly. From 1953-5 its membership quadrupled to 6,000. And from 1956 to '61 it expanded "tenfold to between 50 and 75 thousand," now recruiting middle class black people and skilled workers as well as prisoners and the urban poor.

However, the NoI was essentially parasitic on the upheaval among black Americans. Its appeal to a minority lay in its passivity and pessimism. It used the white supremacists who fought to maintain the racist system of Jim Crow segregation that existed in the southern states to illustrate its message that black people would never be granted equal rights. Advances were denied, and leaders like Martin Luther King were denounced as "Uncle Toms".

The NoI's stand led it to some strange political alliances. In the 1920s Marcus Garvey had met the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, Edward Young Clarke, reasoning that as they both opposed racial intermarriage and favoured the separation of the races, they had common ground. The NoI repeated Garvey's craziness — for similar reasons — by inviting American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell to its rallies. In 1962, in front of 12 000 NoI members Rockwell declared, "You know we call you niggers. But wouldn't you rather be confronted by honest white men who tell you to your face what others say behind your back?" The NoI presented Rockwell as the authentic voice of white America.

A PUBLIC FIGURE

During the massive growth of the NoI Malcolm X was its public face, speaking regularly at NoI rallies, as well as on university campuses and to the media.

As a consequence he came under political pressure from the mainstream civil rights movement, occasionally openly bending towards the need for black people to participate in

the ongoing struggle. This was one factor behind Malcolm's expulsion from the NoI at the end of 1963/start of 1964.

However, there were other factors too. The NoI tithed its membership and made money from investments, and selling its newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. As a result, Elijah Muhammad and his family became very well off, living in luxury. Malcolm also became aware that Elijah Muhammad was a sexual predator, who had fathered children with a number of young women, while enforcing a conservative sexual code on his followers.

Malcolm — famous across the US and beyond — was living with his young family on modest NoI funding and appeared as a threat to those around Elijah Muhammad at his Chicago headquarters. At the end of 1963, in the aftermath of the assassination of president J F Kennedy, Malcolm commented that Kennedy's killing was an instance of "chickens coming home to roost," something that, "never did make me sad; they've always made me glad." Malcolm was denounced in the press and the NoI leadership used the incident to freeze Malcolm out of the organisation.

THE SPLIT

Malcolm took a small number out of the NoI and formed a new Islamic organisation Muslim Mosque Incorporated (MMI). He then took two long trips abroad which helped to alter his worldview.

First, he visited Mecca, where he was sponsored by the Saudi authorities, and adopted a more orthodox form of Islam. Bound up with this religious shift was a political one: he had discovered that there were many perfectly good Muslims who were white, which brought him flatly up against the NoI idea that all white people were "devils".

Second, he toured many newly-independent African states. He began to place more emphasis on the black struggle in the US as a part of a global anti-racist, anti-colonial fight. He praised the Cuban state and, worse, the development of a Chinese nuclear bomb.

Back in the US he founded the secular Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) as an American compliment to the recently formed Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The OAAU had a vague platform and its immediate political emphasis was to bring charges against the US's treatment of black Americans to the United Nations.

At the end of his life he began to pose the question of fighting racism in a way that contrasted radically to the NoI: "We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary."

The words "by any means necessary" have often been read as a call to arms (they were that, at least in the sense of advocating the right to self-defence) but "by any means" had also come to mean political activity. And just as important was the fact that Malcolm X was now situating the struggle within the framework of a general fight for human equality.

THE MURDER

However, Malcolm's new political movement was hampered at every turn by a campaign of harassment and violence by the NoI. The future leader of the NoI, Louis Farrakhan (then Louis X) stated that Malcolm was "worthy of death".

The NoI was an authoritarian sect which had a powerful paramilitary wing, the Fruit of Islam (FoI). Ironically, although Malcolm and the NoI had a reputation as an organisation willing to meet racist and police violence with their own, mostly the FoI was used against NoI members or dissidents. The FoI regularly beat — and occasionally killed — those NoI members who had crossed the organisation.

On Sunday 21 February a group of five NoI members shot and killed Malcolm in front of his wife, Betty, and children at a rally at the Audubon Ballroom. It was a tragic, stupid killing.

During the last phase of his life Malcolm spoke at a number of meetings organised by the US Trotskyist group, the Socialist Workers Party (no relation to the British SWP), who believed that Malcolm's ideas were "growing over" towards Marxism. In fact Malcolm would have needed a sharp, conscious break with black nationalism and a general ill-defined "anti-imperialism" to come over to Marxism.

If he had developed in a "straight line" he would have found himself with a lot in common with the Black Panthers — founded in 1966.

Malcolm X remains an important, even iconic, figure. He was a brave, dedicated and honest opponent of racism and injustice. That is how we should remember him.

Marcus Garvey

Glorious Dublin, 1913

The Dublin Labour War was one of the great battles of the working class. In 1913, under the leadership of Jim Larkin, the working class of Dublin was making Dublin one of the best organised cities in the world.

Dublin's slums were officially admitted to be among the worst in the British Empire. Infant mortality was higher there than in Calcutta. During the 1914-18 war, a British Army recruiting leaflet would tell the workers of Dublin that the war trenches of France were healthier than the slums of Dublin! But now the workers were on the move.

The workers had discovered the power of the sympathetic, solidarity strike. Where necessary they brought their weight as a class to bear on each individual employer on behalf of his employees.

Wages were pushed up. Conditions began to improve. The workers, long downtrodden, became everywhere assertive and confident. A tremendous growth of working class dignity and self respect began to make Dublin uncomfortable for the upper classes.

So the bosses organised themselves in a cartel and locked out every worker who would not leave or promise never to join "Larkin's union".

This week we print two articles by James Connolly, "Glorious Dublin" and "A titanic struggle".

By James Connolly

To the readers of *Forward* possibly some sort of apology is due for the non-appearance of my notes for the past few weeks, but I am sure that they quite well understand that I was, so to speak, otherwise engaged. On the day I generally write my little screed, I was engaged on the 31st of August in learning how to walk around in a ring with about forty other unfortunates kept six paces apart, and yet slip in a word or two to the poor devil in front of or behind me without being noticed by the watchful prison warders.

The first question I asked was generally "say, what are you in for?" Then the rest of the conversation ran thus:

"For throwing stones at the police."

"Well, I hope you did throw them and hit."

"No, by God, that's the worst of it. I was pulled coming out of my own house."

"Pulled" is the Dublin word for arrested. It was somewhat mortifying to me to know that I was the only person apparently in prison who had really committed the crime for which I was arrested. It gave me a sort of feeling that I was lowering the moral tone of the prison by coming amongst such a crowd of blameless citizens.

But the concluding part of our colloquy was a little more encouraging. It usually finished in this way:

"Are you in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union?"

"Of course I am."

"Good. Well if they filled all the prisons in Ireland they can't beat us, my boy."

"No, thank God, they can't; we'll fight all the better when we get out."

And there you have the true spirit. Baton charges, prison cells, untimely death and acute starvation — all were faced without a murmur, and in face of them all, the brave Dublin workers never lost faith in their ultimate triumph, never doubted but that their organisation would emerge victorious from the struggle. This is the great fact that many of our critics amongst the British labour leaders seem to lose sight of. The Dublin fight is more than a trade union fight; it is a great class struggle, and recognised as such by all sides. We in Ireland feel that to doubt our victory would be to lose faith in the destiny of our class.

I heard of one case where a labourer was asked to sign the agreement forswearing the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and he told his employer, a small capitalist builder, that he refused to sign. The employer, knowing the man's circumstances, reminded him that he had a wife and six children who would be starving within a week. The reply of this humble labourer rose to the heights of sublimity. "It is true, sir," he said, "they will starve; but I would rather see them go out one by one in their coffins than that I should disgrace them by signing that." And with head erect he walked out to share hunger and privation with his loved ones. Hunger and privation — and honour.

Defeat, bah! How can such a people be defeated? His case is typical of thousands more. Take the case of the United Builders Labourers' Trade Union, for instance. This was a rival union to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Many sharp passages had occurred between them, and the employers counted confidently upon their cooperation in the struggle; Mr William Martin Murphy especially



Young Dublin women, c.1900



1913: Jim Larkin and James Connolly (back row) with Mrs Bamber, Liverpool Trades Council, and Bill Haywood, Industrial Workers of the World

praising them and exulting in their supposed acquiescence in his plans. Remember also that they were a dividing society, dividing their funds at the end of each year, and therefore without any strike funds. When the members of their union were asked to sign the agreement, promising never to join or help the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, not one man consented — but all over Dublin their 2,500 members marched out "to help the I.T.&G.W.U. boys." Long ere these lines are written, they have experienced all the horrors of starvation, but with grim resolve they have tightened their belts and presented an unyielding front to the enemy.

It is a pleasure to me to recall that I was a member of their Union before I went to America, and that they twice ran me as their candidate for Dublin City Council before the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was dreamed of.

What is true of that union is also true of most of the tradesmen. All are showing wonderful loyalty to their class. Coachbuilders, sawyers, engineers, bricklayers, each trade that is served by general labourers, walks out along with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union boys; refuses to even promise to work with any one who signs the employers' agreement, and, cheering, lines up along with their class.

WOMEN

Or think of the heroic women and girls. Did they care to evade the issue, they might have remained at work, for the first part of the agreement asks them to merely repudiate the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and as women they are members of the Irish Women Workers' Union, not of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

But the second part pledges them to refuse to "help" the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union — and in every shop, factory and sweating hell-hole in Dublin, as the agreement is presented, they march out with pinched faces, threadbare clothes, and miserable footgear, but with high hopes, undaunted spirit, and glorious resolve shining out of their eyes. Happy the men who will secure such wives; thrice blessed the nation which has such girls as the future mothers of the race! Ah, comrades, it is good to have lived in Dublin in these days!

And then our friends write deprecatingly to the British press of the "dislocation of trade" involved in sympathetic strikes, of the "perpetual conflicts" in which they would involve great trade unions. To those arguments, if we can call them such, our answer is sufficient. It is this: If the capitalist class knew that any outrages upon a worker, any attack upon labour, would result in a prompt dislocation of trade, perhaps national in its extent; that the unions were prepared to spend their last copper if necessary rather than permit a brother or sister to be injured, then the knowledge would not only ensure a long cessation from industrial skirmishing such as the unions are harassed by today, it would not only ensure peace to the unions, but what is of vastly more importance, it would ensure to the individual worker a peace from slave-driving and harassing at his work such as the largest unions are apparently unable to guarantee under present methods.

Mark, when I say "prepared to spend their last copper if necessary," I am not employing merely a rhetorical flourish, I am using the words literally. As we believe that in the socialist society of the future the entire resources of the nation must stand behind every individual, guaranteeing him against want, so today our unions must be prepared to fight

with all their resources to safeguard the rights of every individual member.

The adoption of such a principle, followed by a few years of fighting on such lines to convince the world of our earnestness, would not only transform the industrial arena, but would revolutionise politics. Each side would necessarily seek to grasp the power of the state to reinforce its position, and politics would thus become what they ought to be, a reflex of the industrial battle, and lose the power to masquerade as a neutral power detached from economic passions or motives.

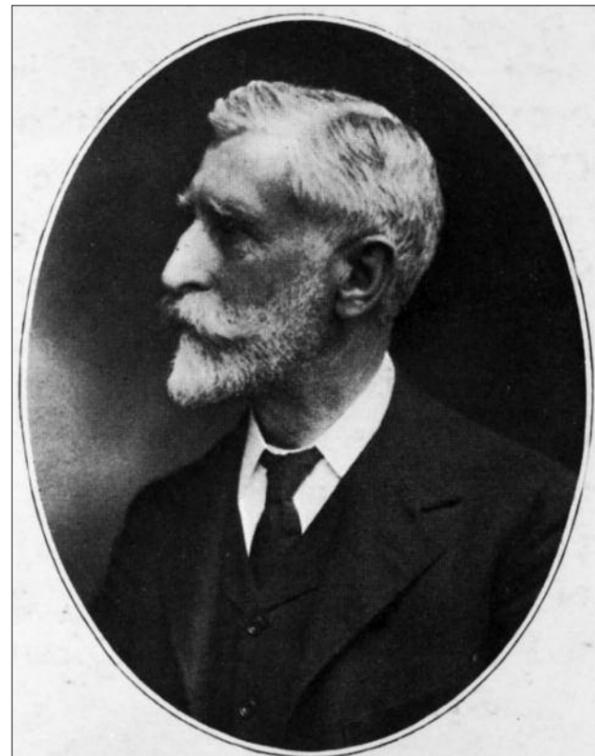
At present I regret to say labour politicians seem to be losing all reality as effective aids to our struggles on the industrial battlefield, are becoming more and more absorbed in questions of administration, or taxation, and only occasionally, as in the miners' national strike, really rise to a realisation of their true role of parliamentary outposts of the industrial army.

The parliamentary tail in Britain still persist in wagging the British industrial dog. Once the dog really begins to assert his true position, we will be troubled no more by carping critics of labour politics, nor yet with labour politicians' confessions of their own impotence in such great crises as that of the railway strike or the Johannesburg massacres.

Nor yet would we see that awful spectacle we have seen lately of labour politicians writing to the capitalist press to denounce the methods of a union which, with 20,000 men and women locked out in one city, is facing an attempt of 400 employers to starve its members back into slavery.

And thou, Brutus, that you should play the enemy's game at such a crisis! Every drop of ink you spilled in such an act stopped a loaf of bread on its way to some starving family.

From *Forward*, 4 October 1913



William Martin Murphy led the bosses in the 1913 lockout

A titanic struggle

By James Connolly

What is the truth about the Dublin dispute? What was the origin of the Dublin dispute? These are at present the most discussed questions in the labour world of these islands, and I have been invited by the editor of the *Daily Herald* to try and shed a little light upon them for the benefit of its readers. I will try and be brief and to the point, whilst striving to be also clear.

In the year 1911 the National Seamen's and Firemen's Union, as a last desperate expedient to avoid extinction, resolved upon calling a general strike in all the home ports. At that time the said Union as the lawyers would say, was, more or less, an Ishmael among trade unions. It was not registered, in most places it was not even affiliated to the local Trades Union Councils, and its national officials had always been hostile to the advanced labour movement. They believed, seemingly, in playing a lone hand.

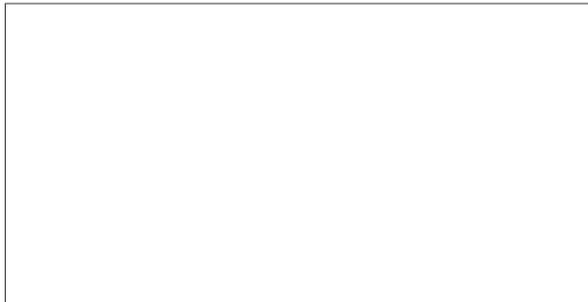
Perhaps the general discredit into which it had been brought by the curiously inconsistent action of its leaders in closely identifying themselves with one of the orthodox political parties, and at the same time calling for the aid in industrial conflicts of the labour men whom they fought and slandered in political contests, had something to do with the general weakness and impending bankruptcy of the National Seamen's and Firemen's Union, at the time it issued its call in 1911.

At all events the call was in danger of falling upon deaf ears, and was, in fact, but little heeded until the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union began to take a hand in the game. As ships came into the Port of Dublin, after the issue of the call, each ship was held up by the dockers under the orders of James Larkin until its crew joined the union, and signed on under union conditions and rates of pay.

Naturally, this did not please the shipowners and merchants of Dublin. But the delegates of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union up and down the docks preached most energetically the doctrine of the sympathetic strike, and the doctrine was readily assimilated by the dockers and carters. It brought the union into a long and bitter struggle along the quays, a struggle which cost it thousands of pounds, imperilled its very existence, and earned for it the bitterest hatred of every employer and sweater in the city, every one of whom swore they would wait their chance to "get even with Larkin and his crew."

The sympathetic strike having worked so well for the seamen and firemen, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union began to apply it ruthlessly in every labour dispute. A record of the victories it has won for other trade unions would surprise a good many of its critics. A few cases will indicate what, in the hands of Larkin and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, it has won for some of the skilled trades.

When the coachmakers went on strike the Irish Transport



Scab-herding paper *The Toiler* accuses Jim Larkin of being the son of a British spy

and General Workers' Union took over all the labourers, paid them strike pay, and kept them out until the coachmakers won. The latter body are now repaying us by doing scab work while we are out.

The mill-sawyers existed for 20 years in Dublin without recognition. The sympathetic strike by our union won them recognition and an increase of pay.

The stationary engine drivers, the cabinetmakers, the sheet metal workers, the carpenters, and, following them all the building trades got an increase through our control of the carting industry. As did also the girls and men employed in Jacob's biscuit factory.

In addition to this work for others, we won for our own members the following increases within the last two years: cross channel dockers got, since the strike in the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, an increase of wages of 3s. per week. In the case of the British and Irish Company the increase, levelling it up with the other firms, meant a rise of 6s. per week. For men working for the Merchants' Warehousing Company 3s. per week, general carriers 2s. to 3s., coal fillers halfpenny per ton, grain bushellers 1d. per ton, men and boys in the bottle-blowing works from 2s. to 10s. per week of an increase, mineral water operatives 4s. to 6s. per week, and a long list of warehouses in which girls were exploited were compelled to give some slight modification of the inhuman conditions under which their employees were labouring.

As Mr Havelock Wilson, General Secretary, National Seamen's and Firemen's Union, has mentioned the strike on the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company as an instance of our erratic methods, it may be worth while to note that as a result of that strike some of his sailors got an increase of 5s. 6d. per week.

In addition to the cases enumerated I might also mention that the labourers on the Dublin and South-Eastern Railway got increases of 6s. per week, and those in the Kingstown Gas Works got increases varying from 3s. to 10s. per week per man.

All of these increases were the result of the sympathetic strike policy, first popularised by its success in winning the

battle for the Seamen and Firemen — who are now asked to repudiate it.

These things well understood explain the next act in the unfolding of the drama. Desiring to make secure what had been gained, Mr. Larkin formulated a scheme for a Conciliation Board.

This was adopted by the Trades Council, at least in essence, and eventually came before the Employers' Executive, or whatever the governing committee of that body is named. After a hot discussion it was put to the vote. Eighteen employers voted to accept a Conciliation Board, three voted against.

Of that three, William Martin Murphy was one. On finding himself in the minority he rose and vowed that in spite of them he would "smash the Conciliation Board."

Within three days he kept his word by discharging two hundred of his tramway traffic employees for being members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and thus forced on the strike of the tramway men. Immediately he appealed to all the Dublin employers who had been forced into a semblance of decency by Larkin and his colleagues, called to their memory the increases of wages they were compelled to pay, and lured them on to a desperate effort to combine and destroy the one labour force they feared.

The employers, mad with hatred of the power that had wrested from them the improved conditions, a few of which I have named, rallied round Murphy, and from being one in a minority of three he became the leader and organising spirit of a band of four hundred.

I have always told our friends in Great Britain that our fight in Ireland was neither inspired nor swayed by theories nor theorists. It grew and was hammered out of the hard necessities of our situation.

Here, in this brief synopsis, you can trace its growth for yourselves. First a fierce desire to save our brothers of the sea, a desire leading to us risking our own existence in their cause. Developing from that an extension of the principle of sympathetic action until we took the fierce beast of capital by the throat all over Dublin, and loosened its hold on the vitals of thousands of our class.

Then a rally of the forces of capital to recover their hold, and eventually a titanic struggle, in which the forces of labour in Britain openly, and the forces of capital secretly, became participants.

That is where we stand to-day. The struggle forming our theories and shaping the policy, not only for us, but for our class. To those who criticise us we can only reply: we fight as conditions dictate; we meet new conditions with new policies. Those who choose may keep old policies to meet new conditions. We cannot and will not try.

First published in the *Daily Herald*, December 6, 1913
Transcribed for the Internet by the Workers' Web ASCII Pamphlet project, September 1997

Timeline

Between 1911 and 1913: By use of sympathy strikes, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), led by Jim Larkin and James Connolly, wins improved conditions and organisation for Dublin workers.

From 15 August 1913: William Martin Murphy sacks more than 200 workers from the Dublin trams, which he owns, for being ITGWU members.

26 August: The ITGWU responds by a strike on the trams, and other sympathy action, for example, a boycott of the distribution of the *Irish Independent* newspaper, also owned by Murphy.

30 August: Police issue a warrant for Larkin's arrest on charges of "seditious language".

31 August: Police baton-charge a workers' rally in Dublin city centre banned by the government, injuring more than 400. Larkin appears at a city-centre balcony to speak to the workers, and is then arrested.

3 September: William Martin Murphy organises a meeting of 400 employers who pledge to lock out all workers who continue to be members of the ITGWU. Thousands of workers attend the funeral of James Nolan, a worker killed by police batons in protests on 30 August.

Early September: British TUC meets, hears pleas for solidarity from Dublin, but responds only by organising food aid for the locked-out workers.

26 September: British government appoints George Askwith to head an inquiry into the dispute.

27 September: A ship arrives in Dublin, bringing 40 tons of food that was raised by British trade unionists to feed the locked-out workers and their families.

6 October: Askwith's inquiry reports, recommending a Conciliation Committee be set up to resolve the dispute without lock-outs or strikes. Bosses reject the report.

17 October: Dora Montefiore and other British socialists and trade unionists arrive in Dublin with plans to help the workers by having their children looked after by British trade unionists' families during the lock-out. The Catholic Church and the bosses raise a hue and cry against this as a threat to the faith and morals of "Catholic children".

From 13 November: Larkin, released from jail, tours Britain calling for workers' solidarity.

November: The union launches the Irish Citizen Army, a workers' militia, to counter further police violence like that on 31 August.

18 January 1914: ITGWU concedes defeat and advises

workers to seek reinstatement. Murphy claims that he has "smashed Larkinism", but in fact the ITGWU survives and grows in the following years.

Who's who

Jim Larkin: a Liverpool Irishman who moved to Belfast in 1902 as an organiser for the National Dock Labourers' Union, and then started the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (1908). He moved to the USA in 1914, after the Dublin lockout, but returned to Ireland in 1923 and was active on the left until his death in 1947.

James Connolly: an Edinburgh Irishman who moved to Dublin in 1896 and founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He was in the USA between 1903 and 1910; returned to Ireland in 1910; became an organiser for the ITGWU in Belfast; was the main leader of the workers in the Dublin lockout while Larkin was in jail or in Britain; led the Irish Citizen Army into the Easter Rising in April 1916 and was shot by the British Government after the defeat of the Rising.

William Martin Murphy: Dublin businessman, owner of the Dublin trams, the *Irish Independent* newspaper, and other enterprises. Irish Nationalist MP in the British Parliament, 1885-1892 and prominent figure in nationalist politics after that. Led the bosses in the 1913 lockout. His *Irish Independent* called for the execution of James Connolly after the 1916 Rising. Died in 1919.

BA strikes on hold

By Darren Bedford

Unite has put the brakes on potential industrial action as it enters into new “exploratory” talks with British Airways management.

In late March, workers voted by 83% (on a 72% turnout) to take further strike action in a dispute which has stretched over two years. That most recent ballot gave Unite a mandate to call action by 15 April, but according to a union statement BA bosses have agreed to grant the union a month’s extension while talks take place.

The union has declared that “a lasting peace is essential for the well-being of all cabin crew and for the benefit of British Airways’

customers.” The overly-conciliatory language does not bode well.

Workers are already in a worse position now than when the dispute began, with the latest ballot focusing on attacks suffered during earlier strikes.

Unite says it wants to resolve three key issues, two of which pertain to the attacks and victimisations. The final one calls for “measures to address concerns on earnings and lifestyle associated with the established changes in on-board crew numbers and the introduction of Mixed Fleet.” This implies fairly strongly that the union has now given up on defeating the introduction of the cuts which sparked the initial dispute, seeing them as

“established changes” and hoping only for “concerns” to be “addressed”. The union’s statement may leave some cabin crew workers wondering why they’ve been in dispute for two years (and on strike several times) without winning a single crumb (and indeed being markedly worse-off in many cases). There has also been some backsliding in terms of member-control and democracy in the dispute.

The BA cabin crew workers, who have stood resolute under severe attacks from an extremely anti-union management, deserve better than to have their dispute wound up from above in return for some phony “peace talks” with BA bosses.

In brief

NOTTS COUNTY COUNCIL

GMB members at Nottinghamshire County Council have voted 6 to 1 in favour of industrial action in an indicative ballot. A full ballot for strike action will now follow.

Workers at the council are facing a pay cut equivalent to 12%, comprised of several individual cuts. Many of these cuts are already in place.

Unison members at the council have already taken strike action, and although it comes later than might be hoped, the GMB’s decision to move towards action as well may contribute towards breaking the perception of the GMB as the “no-strike” union in many public sector workplaces.

LONDON AMBULANCES
The number of emergency vehicles on London’s streets could be

cut by 18% as the London Ambulance Service looks to axe 900 jobs as part of a £53 million “savings” plan.

The 900 posts include 560 “front line” staff, including paramedics and medical technicians. With ambulance call-outs currently increasing at a rate of around 4% per year, the increased workload on remaining workers will be enormous. Unions organising at LAS are consulting their members on how to respond to the cuts.

SALTEND SIT-IN
Workers have staged a sit-in at the Saltend bio-fuels plant as the GMB, one of the unions which organises them, put itself on a war-footing by creating a £100,000 strike fund.

430 engineering construction workers have been locked for almost a month after their employers – companies contracted by Vivergo (a consortium made up for BP, British Sugar and Du Pont) to work on the plant — told

them there was no more work available. The move is widely believed to be a ploy to replace the workers, who work under the terms of the National Agreement for the Engineering and Construction Industry (NAECI), with lower-paid workers not covered by the agreement.

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said “It is reprehensible that neither the contractors nor the site’s owners, BP, seem to care about these 430 workers who have been locked out. GMB does care and will escalate the campaign for justice.” GMB shop stewards were due to meet on Monday 18 April to discuss taking the campaign forward.

Solidarity at the site has already begun to develop, with other groups of workers refusing to cross pickets put on by the locked-out engineering-construction workers. Protests at the gates of the site, near Hull, have already stopped traffic. Vivergo has said it is “appalled” by the protests.

Students shifting left?

By Ed Maltby

At the 2011 National Union of Students conference, 12-14 April, the minority votes against the leadership on a national demo and on universal grants were very strong.

NCAFC supporters Michael Chessum and Sean Rillo Raczka scored well in the elections for VP Education and VP Welfare. The results for the part-time section of the executive, where AWL member and Royal Holloway president-elect Daniel Cooper withdrew in favour of Michael Chessum, were not out when we went to press. In the election for President, the leadership was split, after incumbent Aaron Porter’s decision to stand down following his humiliation by student protesters.

The more left-leaning of the two leadership candidates, Liam Burns, was ahead of Porter’s hand-picked successor Shane Chowen in the first round and won easily after three quarters of left candidate Mark Bergfeld’s votes transferred to him. As President of NUS Scotland, Burns has led a somewhat more active campaign than NUS UK; the day before the vote he was at the Newcastle College picket lines and argued in favour of a national demo.

However, overall the student movement bureaucracy remained firmly in control. The leadership beat the left in the elections for every full-time position by a big margin. We were defeated narrowly even on the demand for another first term national demonstration.

Though it has left behind a sediment of increased student activism, the high tide of struggle last winter

has receded. Most student unions involve only small numbers of students, and have opaque, bureaucratized structures which make this difficult to change. NUS itself is much less open and democratic than it used to be; the conference is about half the size it was a decade ago.

And there were some danger signs for the future. A small minority of right-wing delegates got up to oppose even very moderate motions as too radical. A motion from Birmingham University which hinted that NUS should accept £9,000 fees and move on was passed over left opposition.

ORGANISE

But both the fringe meetings AWL members were involved in organising — one in solidarity with the Newcastle College strike against jobs cuts taking place as the conference opened, and one joint NCAFC-SWP meeting on the way forward for anti-cuts activists — were well-attended.

The strike got an enthusiastic response and set a tone for the left at the conference. There were more people around than in previous years dissatisfied with the NUS leadership and looking for something better.

While last year’s struggles show the necessity and possibility of organising action outside the framework of NUS, there are also possibilities for or-

ganising within the national union, and perhaps growing ones.

To take advantage, the left needs to be better organised. Much of the left intervention at this conference was shambolic. The slate put together for the full-time executive positions was a sectarian stitch-up dominated by the SWP and running on a not very radical program; there was not enough left text submitted; and many “left-wing” speeches were dire, making no attempt to seriously challenge the right’s arguments.

None of this is just an organisational matter, however. It is linked to the lack of a properly functioning rank-and-file network in the student movement which can link up anti-cuts groups, left-wing student union officers and other left activists into a force capable of seriously challenging the NUS leadership. At the conference, the NCAFC was the only group that even attempted to play such a role; the SWP made no attempt to organise anyone beyond themselves. But for reasons discussed previously, the NCAFC is not adequate.

What happens at the next NUS conference depends not only on whether there is a new upsurge of student activity, but how effectively the already growing number of activists can organise ourselves into a rank-and-file movement inside and outside NUS.

• Sign the call for a National Demonstration! See www.anticuts.com or email nationaldemo2011@gmail.com

• The AWL was involved in a debate about Unite Against Fascism at the conference. See www.workersliberty.org/nusanduaif

“Forward to the past” is no answer for Labour

Maria Exall



“Family, faith and flag” is being promoted as Labour’s new big idea.

Nostalgia for a time when men were men, the church had more social control, and England used to win World Cups is patently ridiculous. But nostalgia can be a strong political force — a negative one.

I was pondering the negative power of nostalgia after the National Execu-

tive Council meeting of the CWU recently. The meeting formally agreed to wipe out the discipline charges made by the previous Union of Postal Workers (UPW) Executive against members of the London Divisional Committee (LDC) who took solidarity action for the Grunwick strikers.

Everyone lauds the brave Grunwick strikers now but in 1977 the An-

nual Conference of the UPW upheld the decision of the Executive and imposed sanctions on the London activists, including substantial fines. (For the record, a certain delegate from Slough called Alan Johnson spoke up in support of the LDC activists.)

The picture painted by many socialists of the strong organisation, militancy and class consciousness of the trade union movement in the 1970s often hides much more complex and interesting stories. I am not disputing the relatively weak situation of the trade union movement now but rather

challenging the idea of a “golden age” of trade unionism that we can return to.

The idea of class, and the cutting edge of class struggle, changes along with changes in the modes of production, distribution and exchange.

A large part of the perception of the “militant 70s” or “true blue collar” trade unionism is unhelpful nostalgia that covers up real history. It does us no favours to present a cartoon story of workers’ struggle when the real history is contradictory and uneven. We cannot learn the important lessons of history if we live en-

thralled to myth.

Then, as now, solidarity was a dangerous idea when put into practice. Then, as now, collective class consciousness was fragile. Then, as now, the conservatism of apolitical trade unionism was destructive. Building practical solidarity, developing class consciousness and opposing apolitical trade unionism are worthwhile priorities for trade unionists today.

A short footnote on “blue Labour” — it is a mix of social conservatism and relatively progressive political economics, promoted by Jon Cruddas, Maurice Glasman and

Jonathan Rutherford. It has little to do with mainstream Labour traditions and a lot more to do with the left communitarianism of a Christian “third way”.

These ideas have only ever had minor political purchase in the UK, though the influence of similar ideas in the US such as that of Jim (“God’s Politics”) Wallis has been much greater, mainly because they don’t have a Labour Party.

But even if “blue Labour” was fully in the mainstream of traditional “old Labour” we should still reject it — for reasons that the Grunwick strikers know.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Misrata: our Guernica, our Srebrenica

By Martyn Hudson

On 18 April anti-Qaddafi rebels in Misrata — Libya's third-largest city, and the main city held by rebels in the west of the country — were reported as saying that without outside aid the city would soon fall to its month-long siege by Qaddafi's army.

They said that there had been no NATO air strikes on the siege troops for three days.

The European Union has a plan to send up to one thousand ground troops to Misrata "to secure the delivery of aid supplies", and to fight only in self-defence. EU officials say they are waiting for UN endorsement of the plan. On 19 April the British government said that ten British officers and a similar num-

ber of French would go to Libya to advise the rebels.

The EU, like NATO, talks of helping the rebels only because they want to "live down" their past links with Qaddafi and lay the basis for good relations with the post-Qaddafi regime in oil-rich Libya.

Socialists must oppose any trust in or endorsement of the EU and NATO. But positively to try to stop EU and NATO aid for the rebels — as some on the left

are doing — is to get our priorities entirely wrong.

In the same way that Guernica, and Srebrenica in more recent years, hold a place in the awful annals of tyrant history, so will rebel Misrata, now and for the decades to come.

Whilst the majority of the UK left wavers or does what it can to stop NATO action against Qaddafi, 300 000 people are being left to their fate in a murderous onslaught by Qaddafi loyal-

ist forces. Some humanitarian access has been granted in theory by the regime but so far only the Red Cross has been allowed in — and their report is absolutely damning in terms of the attacks on the civilian population of the city.

Cluster bombs are being rained down on the streets and houses of Misrata and loyalist militias, sometimes uniformed, sometimes not have been trying to take the city street by street. They are using mosques, schools and hospitals as forward posts. Civilians, including women and children, are being used as human shields.

NATO commander Charles Bouchard has argued that it is like watching a knife fight in a telephone booth. And that is what NATO is doing — watching.

Continued on page 3

Cameron slaps Lib Dems, woos racist vote

By Gerry Bates

On 14 April, David Cameron tried to firm up the Tory vote for 5 May with a hardline speech on immigration and on welfare cuts.

The speech was made to an invited audience of Tory activists in a small town, but pushed to the press so that it would get front-page headlines. (*Daily Mail*: "PM savages Labour's open-door policy").

Lib-Dem leader and deputy prime minister Nick Clegg said he saw the speech in advance and "noted rather than approved" it. Lib-Dem business minister Vince Cable, more irritably, told the BBC that the speech was "very unwise".

"I do understand there is an election coming but talk of mass immigration risks inflaming extremism".

In his speech Cameron repeated the Tories' pre-election plan to cut net immigration to tens of thousands. This plan was widely reckoned to be demagogic flim and impractical short of economic slump which would encourage mass emigration.

Cable noted: "The reference to [reducing numbers to] tens of thousands of immigrants rather than hundreds of thousands is not part of the coalition agreement, it is Tory party

policy only".

Cameron seems to have got away with a calculated slap at the Lib Dems. The media were allowed to report that "many Lib Dems" were annoyed at Cable's reaction, and Cable himself softened his criticism in later comments.

The conflict will not go away. Lib-Dem opposition to the Tories on this is stiffened by substantial discontent with the Tories' curbs on immigration among big business and among university chiefs.

Cable did not mention Cameron's linking of his anti-migrant stand with a hard welfare-cuts line.

"The real issue is this: migrants are filling gaps in the labour market left wide open by a welfare system that for years has paid British people not to work.

"That's where the blame lies — at the door of our woeful welfare system... That's another powerful reason why this government is undertaking the biggest shake-up of the welfare system for generations..."

Cameron stressed that he is not against rich immigrants. He will "roll out the red carpet for anyone who has a great business idea and serious investment".

To rally the Tory base, and spook the Lib Dems, Cameron defined the prob-

lem as "the largest influx of people Britain has ever had" creating "discomfort and disjointedness in some neighbourhoods".

He would know that the press would translate that into such terms as "Britain has been torn apart by the biggest influx of immigrants in history" (opening words of the *Daily Mail* front page).

In the midst of economic crisis where people will want to find easy targets to blame for loss of jobs and services, Cameron is

knowingly playing with racist fire.

Labour leader Ed Miliband, however, commented only: "The next time he makes a speech why don't they get a grip, have a proper discussion in government, get an agreed policy, because that's the right way to run a government".

The fight against welfare cuts and the fight for open borders go hand in hand. And if pushed hard enough, they can crack this coalition apart.

Justice for Smiley Culture

Around 3,000 people attended the 16 April protest about the death in police custody of reggae singer David Emmanuel, better known as Smiley Culture.

The Campaign for Justice for Smiley Culture is demanding a genuinely independent inquiry in place of the one by the so-called Independent Police Complaints Commission.

The mood of the demo was militant. The police kept a low profile — they evidently prefer to keep their racist violence for more private occasions.

• Facebook: "Campaign for Justice for Smiley Culture"

Teachers set to strike on 30 June

By Patrick Murphy,
National Union of
Teachers Executive,
(pc)

If all goes to plan the conference of the National Union of Teachers (22-26 April) will vote to ballot union members on taking strike action to defend pension rights.

If they do there is every chance that they will be joined by college lecturers' union UCU and civil servants' union in co-ordinated strike action. The NUT may also be joined by other teaching unions, ATL and NASUWT.

We will have put in place the beginnings of a trade union coalition prepared to take action. We will need, however, to move onto the next hurdles very quickly. The first is to deliver a huge vote for action and build up confidence and militancy amongst the membership. The second is to develop a strategy that can win.

Delegates from our union will need to go back and immediately organise briefings for school reps to put the case for action. We will get a big yes vote for action — the survey work done by the union shows that to be the case. The real challenge will be to achieve a strong turnout. If other teachers' unions decide to take action, the prospects of a good turnout and overwhelming yes vote will be massively increased.

FIGHT TO WIN

We cannot enter into this battle with the idea that we are simply "making a valiant stand". This is not demonstrative protest action in the way that, for the most part, the 2008 pay strike was. We need to win.

If the government get away with increasing the retirement age on a sliding scale (65, 66, 68 then 70), making us pay more even though the pension scheme is in not financial difficulty and reducing the value of our income in retirement. the impact on the living standards of teachers will be unprecedented.

Tens of thousands of pounds lost during retirement, a huge levy taken from our wages and we will spend most of our sixties in the classroom. But we all know, as do the government, that most teachers will not really be able to remain in schools until 65-70. Instead they will retire early, either on much reduced pensions or on no income, while they wait to collect their pensions at the increased normal pension age. To lose this battle is, in

short, to consign teachers to an old age lived out in poverty.

If one of the most organised, highly-trained and better-paid sections of the working class can be forced to accept those conditions the outlook for the rest of the public sector will be bleak indeed.

WE NEED:

• A national strike day co-ordinated with as many other unions as possible. It looks like this will be 30 June.

If it can be earlier we should continue to keep that option open.

• Name in advance at least one further national strike day before the end of the summer term. Having done all the careful and difficult work of building the momentum for action it is crucial to maintain it at a high level.

• To use selective action to maintain momentum and keep the pressure on government. If that can also be co-ordinated with other public sector unions, that is good.

• To take control of access to schools by, for example, providing "emergency cover". This will give us more control of our dispute and help maintain parental and public support.

• To convene regular school reps' councils for the duration of the dispute.

• To encourage local assemblies of workplace reps from all unions involved in the action to ensure the maximum effectiveness of all joint action.

The Coalition has set about attacking the welfare state using the tactic of "shock and awe". We can learn from this. Most successful industrial disputes win quickly — most long drawn out disputes lose. The Coalition need to be reeling from the effect of our action on pensions as soon as possible.

If we are serious about this action we can win. And if we win the attempt to make public sector workers pay for the economic crisis with more years of wage slavery and lower pay followed by poverty in retirement will be in tatters. If we organise this fight seriously we send a signal to the rest of the labour movement that the government's austerity agenda does not have to be accepted and isn't inevitable — collective action can still defend our conditions and our rights.

That's a prize worthy of our maximum effort. Let's go about it with a determination worthy of the cause.