

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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FOR SALE!

Strike on 30 November! Fight the cuts!

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.
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Syria: time means lives

A Syrian activist living in the UK spoke to Ed Maltby

Organisation began in March when the regime kidnapped some children in Daa'ra and refused to release them.

That ignited lots of anger in Daa'ra, and that spirit went over the whole country. People responded in Damascus and all over the country, out of solidarity.

But there are no real organizations, just normal people going out to express their anger. There is no ideology, people just want to revolt against the regime and the things it is doing.

Every week, a focus or a slogan is decided over the internet. International media is not allowed into Syria, and communications are controlled so people cannot contact each other. So people have to talk to each other over twitter and Facebook.

The revolution demands the removal of the President who has killed and tortured so many people.

People test the mood of

the movement and agree a common slogan every week: "Challenge" has been one; "Anger" has been another.

Oppression has been going on for decades — low pay, high unemployment, the highest in the world, so the government didn't have to care about retirement policies, or workers' safety in the factories, or minimum wage. There are children under 15 years old working full-time in factories. They don't go to school, because they need to support their families. The situation is so miserable under Ba'ath Party rule. Workers joined the people in the revolution because they share the same suffering.

There have been calls for strikes in many cities. There were strikes in Daa'ra, in Homs, in Hama, in some suburbs of Damascus. But the government won't let strikes take place in Damascus or Aleppo. If you don't show up to work they will come to your house and take your wife, husband, brother sister.

There are strikes in textiles, factories, the service

sector, the banking sector.

In Syria the trade unions are controlled by the government, and do not act independently. They have been infiltrated by the security services. They have lists of all the members, and they pass workers' details to the security services. So these strikes have just been normal workers taking action.

We wanted diplomatic pressure and political pressure, but we don't want military pressure at this moment in time. People are asking for the imposition of protection, of a no-fly zone. We have defected officers who can fight this regime, but they can't act because we know the regime can attack from the air.

Some people are asking for international intervention because what is happening in Syria is a crime against humanity. Syria is a member of the United Nations and the UN should help set Syria and its people free.

On the NATO intervention in Libya — the people of Libya needed help. The people of Syria need help now. So what solution the

left had in opposing NATO intervention, I don't know. If you oppose something, you need to provide a different solution to help the people who need help, who are suffering.

We went to the Lib Dem conference, the Labour conference and we will go to the Conservative conference, to let members of these parties know what is happening. We are printing leaflets with statistics of the massacres, detentions and arrests.

We really need people to put pressure on the UK government to have a new stance about what's going on in Syria. Britain is supposed to promote human rights and women's rights — but why not in Syria? Time means lives now. Every hour someone is killed and every half an hour someone is being arrested and detained. We need real support.

I don't know why the Syrian embassy is still allowed to be London still, and I don't know what the UK ambassador is doing in Syria. Why isn't he putting on more pressure?

More Scottish but no more left

By Dale Street

The Scottish Labour Party special conference on 29 October will mark the official start of the party's leadership contest in Scotland.

One of the lessons Labour has drawn from the debacle of May's Holyrood elections is that the party in Scotland needs to be more "Scottish", i.e. it should have greater control over its affairs than it exercises at present.

The 29 October conference will therefore be voting on four packages of rule changes which effectively "devolve" power from the Labour Party at a national level to the Labour Party in Scotland, including the power to elect its own leader and deputy leader.

The conference is not a concession to the left, which advocated the convening of a special party conference after Labour's May defeat in order to debate and vote on motions from CLPs and trade unions about how to respond to that defeat.

On the contrary, the conference is simply a constitutional requirement at which the proposed rule changes are likely to be nodded through with little or no debate (but plenty of

and loyalist Blairite. Ken Macintosh MSP is a straight-down-the-line right winger, backed by Jim Murphy MP. Johann Lamont MSP should have resigned as deputy leader after Labour's defeat in May. As deputy leader, she cannot escape some of the blame for that debacle. Instead, she now wants to use that defeat as a springboard for contesting the leader's position.

Johann Lamont MSP

tedious speeches).

Although the leadership contest is yet to be officially launched, seven MSPs and MPs have already expressed an interest in standing, or announced that they will be doing so. (Under the proposed rule changes Holyrood MSPs and Westminster MPs are eligible to contest the positions.)

It is a sad comment on the state of the left in Scotland, especially in the much-reduced ranks of Labour MSPs, that none of the six can be called left-wing. Some of them may be long-standing union members. But that does not equate with being left-wing.

Tom Harris MP, who was the first to declare an interest in standing for leader is a long-standing

A third of the votes in the electoral college for the leader and deputy-leader positions will be cast by trade union affiliates.

Instead of adopting the approach of "backing the best of a bad bunch", affiliated unions in Scotland should issue a statement of the basic policies which a candidate would have to support in order to win union support.

This might encourage more, and better, candidates to throw their hats into the ring.

And the most basic line in the sand must be in relation to the public sector strikes on 30 November.

Affiliated unions should make it clear that any candidate who fails to publicly back the strikes and turn up to picket lines will receive not an ounce of support from the unions.

Scottish students organise

By the SCAFC

The Scottish Campaign Against Fees and Cuts will hold its inaugural conference on the weekend of 15-16 October in Ochil Room, Pleasance, Edinburgh.

We aim to unite anti-cuts activists from universities, colleges and schools across Scotland to take the fight for free, fair and funded education to our institutions management, the Scottish government and beyond.

English, Welsh and Northern Irish students attending Scottish universities now face a potential fee bill of £45,000 for a five year combined masters at Edinburgh (£36,000 for a standard 4-year undergraduate degree). And that comes before they even face any living costs.

The Tory-led government at Westminster are now attempting to force through an education white paper that opens the way for full scale privatisation of higher education.

We cannot allow this to happen.

• More: anticuts.com

Egypt's military targets Copts

By Martin Thomas

Over 30 protesters were killed by military police and sectarian thugs in Cairo on Sunday 9 October.

The military government, blaming the violence on mysterious foreign agitators, seems to be deliberately boosting Muslim-Christian tension as a "divide-and-rule" ploy. Evan Hill reported

on Al Jazeera: "Unidentified gunmen, baton-wielding military police, roving bands of men chanting 'Christians where are you, Islam is here'... But it was the rampaging armoured personnel carriers that stand as the night's horrific symbol of military brutality... Video clearly shows the giant, camouflaged vehicles swerving into crowds of demonstrators, and witnesses re-

ported that some people were run over".

Some leftist Muslims had joined the demonstration, mainly of Coptic Christians protesting against an attack on a Christian church, and protesters chanted "Muslims and Christians... One hand!" and "Death to the Field Marshal" (Tantawi, head of the military government).

On Monday 10th, Copts

gathered outside a hospital where the bodies of some of those killed have been kept were joined by Asma' Mahfouz, a prominent member of the leftist April 6 Youth Movement and a Muslim.

However, the Cairo daily *Al-Masry Al-Youm* found many on the city's streets who said that Sunday's clashes had been caused by a surreptitious foreign plot, remnants of

the old regime or violent protesters, and the military were not to blame.

Ultra-Islamist groups such as Jama'a al-Islamiya, Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Salafi Security Council have called for the postponement of parliamentary elections scheduled for 21 November, on the grounds that "remnants of the former regime" and "foreign elements" are causing instability.

The canny Muslim Brotherhood does not want the elections postponed, but blamed the violence on "the work of domestic and foreign hands endeavouring to abort the revolution", and rebuked the protesters.

"All the Egyptian people have grievances and legitimate demands, not only our Christian brothers. Certainly, this is not the right time to claim them".

Troika demands wage cuts in Greece

By Theodora Polenta

The Troika (European Union, European Central Bank, and IMF) is now demanding that Greece's Pasok government cut the national minimum wage of private sector workers!

The meagre 760 euros (£660) per month that a private sector worker receives is considered too high, and the Troika suggests that it is reduced to 560 euros per month, in line with Portugal's minimum wage.

The Troika's argument is predictable: "Reduce the minimum wage further and it will encourage capital investments. Increase the flexibility of working conditions, and that will encourage businessmen to hire workers, and make the Greek economy more competitive in the world market".

The Pasok government has not agreed to openly break the national agreements. However, it has agreed to cut employers'

insurance contributions by 10%. The expansion of part time employment (two days, three days, four days) instead of full time employment has effectively already cut the minimum wage.

A law has been passed that permits businesses that employ less than 50 people to override the national agreements and pay reduced wages provided that three-fifths of their employed workforce agree.

Further cuts in the minimum wage will throw a bigger number of workers below the poverty line and further sink the whole of the Greek economy into a vicious circle of reduced wages, reduced consumer power, market stagnation, increased unemployment, increased dependency on state benefits, and economic shrinkage.

The Troika representatives have also insisted on other additional measures to collect a further 6 billion euros during the years 2013 and 2014. Even traditional allies of capital

are to be attacked, with government plans to reduce the wages and benefits of judges, military officials, university professors, priests, directors, etc.

The Troika insists that the government should speed up the implementation of the measures already voted through, or about to be voted on. It threatens that it will install their own supervisors and auditors to make sure the austerity budget and measures are implemented.

The previous week's measures had already included suspending 30,000 public sector workers on 60% of their wages and pushing the majority of them into unemployment; big cuts in public sector wages; further reductions on pensions and benefits; tax increases; an upcoming 19% increase on utility bills. Unemployment is already 20%, and expected to go even higher on 2012.

Seven out of 10 Greek families are expected to cut basic necessities from their budget.

In the meantime, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Nicolas Sarkozy are holding talks without the participation or even consultation of the Greek government. Merkel is proposing the further "restructuring" and "cutting down" of the Greek debt by up to 50%-60%.

Such a partial write off of the Greek debt would go with a series of even more aggressive austerity measures, under external supervision, and violation of the sovereignty of the Greek state for decades to come. The "relief" would not come at the expense of bondholders and bankers, but of the majority of Greek society.

So far the austerity measures have brought: negative growth (minus 5%), unemployment at 20%, and an expansion of the debt:GDP ratio to 160% within two years.

The speeding up and expansion of the same policies will lead us to an abyss.

Strikes in Iran

lective bargaining and permanent contracts.

In April this year workers in the Tabriz petrochemical company also took strike action for the right to collective bargaining. Workers in other sectors and international organisations gave the striking workers necessary strength and confidence. That strike was suspended following government promises to respond to the demand of the striking workers, but that turned out to be an empty promise.

More than 70% of Iranian workers are on temporary contracts, and 80% of these are beneath the poverty line. The official minimum wage is around £190 a month. That applies to the poorest eight million workers, not counting those in workshops with fewer than ten workers who are paid less than the minimum wage.

Some workers have not received wages for up to 18 months.

• More: workers-iran.org

By Satar Rahmani

6,500 workers on temporary contracts and working in the state-owned petrochemical complexes in Bandar Imam, south Iran, began a strike on 28 September.

Other workers on permanent contracts have shown their solidarity. Temporary workers are fighting for the right to col-

Denmark's left wins 12 MPs: what now?

By Bjarke Friberg, a member of the RGA, the SAP (Danish section of the Fourth International) and AWL sympathiser

Since 15 September, Denmark has the strongest and largest socialist representation in parliament of any European country. Tripling its votes to 236,000, the Red-Green Alliance (RGA) won a record 12 MPs.

Remarkably, the party spokesperson Johanne Schmidt Nielsen received more personal votes than the Labour leader and newly appointed first female Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning Schmidt.

The RGA is now supporting the incoming minority government of Labour, the Socialist People's Party and the Social Liberal Party. This replaces a liberal-conservative government supported by the far-right. Inheriting a legacy of war, debt and xenophobia, however, will keep the new government firmly within the shackles of the capitalist system. Will the new strength of the socialists result in any kind of policy change?

LESSONS

It took 10 years for the centre-left to take back the majority from the ruling liberal-conservative coalition that has made Danish immigration policy one of the most restrictive in Europe, reduced taxes for the

rich and neglected environmental issues.

Despite this, it has been possible for the left to set a new agenda by working together on a broad platform.

Twenty years, however, was what it has taken for the hard left to rebuild itself to a level resembling the 1970s and early 1980s. The RGA has taken back the space vacated by the old left parties which for the two decades up to 1988 won four to six per cent of the votes before the revolutionary left fell out of parliament.

But both Denmark and the hard left are quite different today. The liberal-conservative government – basing its narrow but effective majority on the right-populist Danish People's Party – has firmly

made its mark.

All that they destroyed has to be rebuilt and renewed, while at the same time reconstructing class organisation and popular internationalism — hopefully now freed from petty-bourgeois "small state" nationalism.

While a genuinely socialist party, the RGA has a relatively low ideological profile. This harks back to the RGA's political roots as a united electoral slate for the remainder of the 1970s and 80s left. In this period, the Danish revolutionary left were represented in parliament by the left-socialist VS (Venstresocialistene) and the Stalinist DKP (Communist Party of Denmark). After 1988, the VS and DKP joined forces with the Trotskyist Fourth Internationalists of SAP

(Socialist Workers' Party) and the Maoists of KAP (Communist Workers' Party). The RGA was founded in 1989.

The RGA won six MPs in 1994. It has gradually strengthened its organisation and politics and now has 7,000 members.

ORGANISATION?

For two decades, the RGA's guiding slogan has been "in favour of anything better, against anything worse", giving the RGA a clean profile against all "dirty deals" and a strong self-consciousness.

All elected MPs and all hired staff receive an average worker's salary and are committed to giving a voice to the extra-parliamentary movements, progressive unions etc. This

has worked surprisingly well.

How will the RGA continue to relate to the extra-parliamentary movements? Whatever the strengths of a voting system with proportional representation — allowing for parties like the RGA to have a platform from where to grow even within the system — it is the extra-parliamentary movements that need to mobilise for systemic change, in alliance with the revolutionary socialists. Socialist MPs can only be there to support these movements and give them a voice.

They can do nothing to replace capitalism without popular and workers' power in the streets and in the workplace.

• Abridged from: tinyurl.com/bjarkef

Guilty of being a modern woman



Last week the Facebook status of a good socialist friend of mine bemoaned the lack of coverage of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement and contrasted it to the copious reporting on Amanda Knox.

The basic point was fair. Yet again the press decided their readers would benefit more from titillation and prurience than from an example of mass popular resistance to untrammelled capitalism. Moreover the Amanda Knox story was bursting with evidence of the deepest and darkest prejudices lingering just below the surface of the British media.

Amanda Knox was found guilty and imprisoned in 2007 in Italy for her apparent part in the murder of British student Meredith Kercher. Knox has always insisted on her innocence. On 4 October she won her appeal against conviction and was freed.

Obviously, neither I nor any reader can know what happened to Meredith Kercher nor whether Amanda Knox had anything to do with it. She is now free because an Italian appeal jury believed that evidence to be flawed.

Most of the UK press, however, have decided that they have the right to make the ultimate decision on Knox’s guilt and that she remains guilty. No constraint such as considering the evidence has stood in the way of British journalism. The not guilty verdict was, in the corny words of a *Daily Mirror* headline on 7 October, “Ob-Knox-ious”.

The very fact that this story was repeatedly billed as “the Amanda Knox trial” is revealing enough. In fact Knox’s former boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito was also on trial. He gets a

mention in some of the reporting but never up front and only where he sheds light on the alleged weirdness of Knox. It is unlikely that this lack of interest is because he is Italian rather than American. Nor can it be explained by him exemplifying chastity, non-participation in sex games, avoidance of drugs or all-round clean-cut image. On the contrary, what his girlfriend did he freely admits to having done with her.

Sollecito’s irrelevance to the story lies in something much more basic. He is a man. Knox is a woman.

In the innocent 1950s-land of the British tabloid press women either don’t do sex and drugs or, if they really must, they very definitely don’t talk about it. Amanda Knox was, unfortunately for her, a normal 20-something female student, sexually active and into the sort of drugs which, as UK government advisers get sacked for pointing out, are many times less harmful than alcohol.

Whatever state those drugs induced in her it cannot have been as illusory as her belief that a 21st-century woman could live this fairly mundane existence without being considered, in the tautological words of one of the prosecuting lawyers, “a demonic, satanic, diabolical she-devil”.

SATANIC

In the British tabloids Amanda Knox lost her first name altogether and becomes “Foxy Knoxy”.

The courtroom drama is tawdred frantically for further evidence of her satanic nature. She smoked joints. She bought condoms! Hang on a minute, don’t they fit onto a penis? And don’t only men have such things? What’s a woman doing buying them? Is she (no, it can’t be true) expecting sex, even (perish the thought) looking forward to it?

To make matters worse she possessed a vibrator. Readers should be spared the details of how these bestial devices work but suffice to say her ownership of one suggests two further damning verdicts. First, she actually enjoyed sex and second, and worst of all, she found a way to pursue this in-

terest without a man present. Sickeningly her particular model was named after one of the British public’s best-loved and cuddliest little animals, the rabbit.

Shortly after returning to the US she was reunited with a college “sweetheart”. The *Daily Mail* managed to obtain a picture of the ex-boyfriend and published it under the headline “does he remind you of anyone?” Sensitive to the poor thinking skills of their readers, alongside the photo is one of her Italian lover Sollecito. The *Mail* comments: “With the same pale skin, glasses and straight mousey hair, Amanda appears to favour the geeky look in her men”.

More weirdness then. Any normal British woman would only enjoy a pint with a square-jawed Adonis and just about tolerate missionary sex. Never prone to subtlety in its suggestiveness, the *Mail* takes this one ugly step further: “Maybe it’s the inspiration of Amanda’s pale-skinned, bespectacled father Curt”.

The most poisonous and misogynistic piece came from *Mail* columnist Amanda Platell, making another judgment on appearances. “There is something disquieting about Amanda Knox,” she says, “something that slightly chills the blood. Those piercing blue eyes have hardly flinched during her court appearances”. I think I know which Amanda chills my blood.

Guilty or otherwise, Knox stands in a very long and sadly unfinished list of women condemned by misogynist journalism, not for what they did but for what they were. Rebecca Leighton, the Stockport nurse, did not, it seems, kill her patients. The Australian woman Lindy Chamberlain really did have her child taken by a dingo. Joanne Lees did not kill her boyfriend in the Australian outback because she was having her affair; they were both the victims of a brutal attack...

Women who do not conform to conservative expectations of their “proper” behaviour in life or in court are repeatedly treated as abnormal, deviant and, worst of all, guilty. Is this as good as it gets? Let’s hope not.



Serge and Trotsky

Sacha Ismail raises some issues in his response to my brief introduction to Serge (Letters, *Solidarity* 219). I will be raising the issue of Kronstadt in a future piece but will briefly respond to some issues now.

The Reiss affair is significant not only in the manner of his death but also because Ignace Reiss exemplified the best aspects of a Bolshevik party as it was being destroyed by Stalinism. Suzi Weissman is currently completing a long article on the Zborowski/Etienne affair and this will look in detail at Sneevliet and Serge.

To describe Sneevliet as a quasi-Trotskyist is rather unfair. He was a member of the Left Opposition and after opposing Trotsky on a number of issues left the camp of the Fourth International — specifically on the question of the POUM.

I agree with Sacha on the question of the POUM. The problem lies in the fact that much of Serge’s work is neglected within Trotskyism because he got it wrong on some questions. It means that his debate with Trotsky on Kronstadt, for example, is neglected as is his early work on the nature of the Soviet Union — because Serge is perceived as a “moralist” or a renegade.

Elsa Poretzky, Reiss’s wife, sums up an attitude to Serge that is still current on the left: “Serge’s natural curiosity had made him keep seeing all kinds of people, Party members, ex-Party members, former anarchists, every kind of oppositionist, until the day he was arrested in Leningrad in 1933. Some considered this showed courage, others irresponsibility. It was probably a bit of both, but carrying on as he did exposed others as well as himself to danger. More baffling still was the fact that Serge had managed to come out of the Soviet Union in 1936. We continued to have doubts about him,” (Poretzky, *Our Own People*).

The whiff of capitulation and betrayal stayed with Serge. It was asked, why was he released? There were grounds to be doubtful of him at the time, particularly in the atmosphere of paranoia in the European opposition outside of the USSR. There is no reason to be doubtful now, as he provides an unparalleled glimpse into the “midnight of the century” — the early life of the Left Opposition, his writings on Germany, his discussion of Kronstadt, his early insights into a bureaucratic collectivist analysis of the USSR.

Equally, any current analysis of Serge has also to take on

board Trotsky’s arrogant disdain and highhandedness when dealing with his erstwhile allies, including Serge. His inability to understand and effectively fight against the rising Stalinist bureaucracy, imprisoned as he was with analogies with the French revolution, with Thermidor and Bonapartism, led to a less clearheaded analysis of the Soviet social formation than Serge. The Serge who was talking to oppositionists in the camps, people who were desperately trying to think through their thwarted revolution.

Certainly one of the key things that Serge wanted to do was to argue that there were breaks and continuities between Bolshevism and Stalinism.

In understanding the October revolution as a huge step forward for the working class, and seeing many of its measures as a commune state fighting for its life, I also totally accept that Stalinism was born of Leninism and October and that the whole idea of a Stalinist counter-revolution is misplaced. The rise of the Cheka, the death penalty, the ordering of arbitrary massacres, Kronstadt, the elimination of political plurality and Soviet legality, labour dictatorship, all point to the affinity between Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin rather than the reverse. And one must remember that the later dispossession of the kulaks, forcible collectivisation and so on were understood at the time as the adoption of the Left Opposition’s programme by Stalin and led many oppositionists to capitulate to the already consolidated bureaucracy.

Remembering Serge reminds us that the tradition of the Trotskyist Left Opposition, with all of its heroism and insight, was not as pristine as we might think. Stalinism was born of the workers’ movement, and reading Serge alerts us always to the danger of it in our midst.

Martyn Hudson, Teesside

No punishment in schools

I agree with Cathy Nugent (*Solidarity* 220) that children need rules, just as adults — ones that make sense and that are logical.

However, if it is not reasonable to reduce adults to tears and frighten them it is not with children, who are more vulnerable; yet with children that approach is considered fine.

My argument is children shouldn’t be subjected to threats and punishment.

Young primary school children are at their most upset and frightened when they think they are in trouble. The thing they have done is nearly always a misunderstanding or trivial — but what overwhelms them is fear. Fear of what the teacher will do to them, fear that their parents will get told.

Working in a school, I respond by telling children not to be frightened, to not listen to the teachers if they are mean, that nothing bad can happen to them.

The fact is that some teachers and other staff will shout at children, and think it’s fine to frighten them. Others will make fun of them in front of larger groups of children and

get them to laugh at those who haven’t followed an order.

These adults use their ability to be sarcastic and “clever” to humiliate children. This approach, which adults may think of as harmless and funny, can be just as damaging as threats. Often the same adults show one face to parents — all smiles and concern — and another when they are left in charge of children.

I don’t think that most teachers are bad or purposefully unkind but teachers do reflect dominant ideas about how children should be treated. Increasingly they think children need discipline and controlling and that they should show more respect to all adults. We need to be in favour of a different approach to treating children.

In his book *I won’t learn from you* Herbert Kohl argues that parents and school authorities are stuck on a single way to live and learn; any youngster who refuses to perform as demanded is seen as a threat.

He discusses how black children in America refused to accept being taught a racist view of history — most did it by refusing to learn, because having a thought-out alternative was too difficult for these children. Children should be advised to refuse to learn the nonsense they are taught about religion, politics, accepted sexism and approach to authority.

In John Holt’s book *How children fail* Holt argues that most children “fail”, do not achieve their potential, because they are afraid of disappointing the anxious adults around them, whose expectations “hang over them like a cloud”. They are bored by trivial demands and confused because they are given a world view that makes no sense.

The different approaches to teaching will come about when movements develop to challenge the way children and adults are taught. These movements will develop, as they have in the past, alongside class struggle and when teachers start to question not just what’s taught and how, but also how children are treated.

There are many teachers and support staff who try and do their best for children in an environment in which teaching is about targets, OFSTED reports, and teachers being disciplined for not enforcing uniform codes. We should view teaching as a subversive art in which socialist teachers try and undermine the system they teach in by, eg, setting up Marxist discussion groups in Catholic schools under the guise of after-school clubs, try to get the working class kids access to the unaffordable extra-curricular activities and encourage them to speak out when they are treated badly.

But won’t getting rid of punishments just result in chaos? In my experience it results in less — children come and tell me if there are problems because they know I will help talk things through with them, not punish them.

Being against punishment in schools doesn’t create an ideal world or fix problems from home — but it does create a better environment in school and could help lay the basis for future movements which will radically change the way we treat children.

Jayne Edwards, Merseyside

NHS: not for sale!

On 11 October the Health and Social Care Bill has its second reading in the House of Lords. The Bill went through the House of Commons between January and September 2011, slower than usual because of a two-month "pause" allowed by the Government midway, but is now being pushed full speed ahead.

Even this late public pressure can push crossbench or Lib-Dem members of the House of Lords into voting through amendments which will block the Bill, or cause problems for the Government when the Bill comes back to the Commons for consideration of amendments (as it must), and thwart this drive to undermine the National Health Service.

Many doctors and health experts oppose the Bill. On 11 October, more than sixty leading doctors published a protest letter. On 4 October, nearly 400 public health experts made a similar statement. The usually-conservative British Medical Association is still calling for the Bill to be withdrawn.

As yet the labour movement has been slow on this issue. There seem to be two reasons. One: that activists have their hands full with pension cuts and service and job cuts which are already under way. Two: that the Tory/ Lib-Dem Bill builds on a long series of marketising changes already pushed through under New Labour, and the movement has become inured to defeats and setbacks on health issues.

But this is an issue as big as any in the Government's plans.

The Bill abolishes the NHS as a coordinated public service, and replaces it by a health market. For now the main purchasing-power for the market will come from Government funds channelled through GP commissioning consortia (now renamed clinical commissioning groups).

The GP commissioning consortia will mostly, in practice, be run by private contractors with whom the GPs cut commercial bargains.

MARKET

Those contractors, in turn, will cut commercial bargains with hospitals and other treatment centres. NHS hospitals will all be transformed into businesses operating independently in the market, by being made foundation trusts or going through management buy-outs.

They will compete against new private-profit health-care outfits for "business" (treating patients).

The Bill abolishes strategic health authorities and Primary Care Trusts, and sets up an almost-independent quango to dispense the NHS budget.

Health minister Lord Howe told a conference of private healthcare operators in London, in September, that they will have "huge opportunities" once the Bill is through.

The "private patient cap" which now limits the proportion of income which NHS hospitals can draw from private patients will be abolished. NHS hospitals will be able to treat any number of private patients they like, even if that is to the detriment of NHS patients. And, of course, if the private patients pay well, they will have an incentive to take more.

Many hospitals will be financially crippled by PFI deals imposed on them by the New Labour governments, under which, for a long time into the future, they have to pay over a large slice of their income to provide profit to private companies who put cash into rebuilding schemes.

If the Bill is pushed through, then a further push to scrap NHS principles altogether, and instead have a "social insurance" system, will be easy. At that stage health care would become entirely, in its basics, a market run for profit. The rich could buy the best. For the poor, the harshness would be tempered by government-organised "insurance" under which we could claim back some costs of treatment. (For example, in Australia, an average visit to a GP will cost you \$70. You can claim back \$34.90 from the government insurance scheme, Medicare).

David Cameron protests, for now, that he wants to keep

More children will live in poverty

The proportion of children living in poverty – defined as below 60 per cent of median income – will rise from 19.3 per cent in 2010-1 to over 24 per cent by 2020.

According to new research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, that is the certain result of changes in welfare benefits and cuts in real wages which are already underway.

The Child Poverty Act 2010, which the Tories did not then oppose, sets a legally-binding target to cut the percentage of children in poverty below 10% by 2020. The *Financial Times* (11 October) reports Government officials shrugging

Blocking the Bill

Around 2,500 people turned up on Westminster Bridge on Sunday 9th, enthusiastic and eager, for a UK Uncut action to block the Health and Social Care Bill.

The bridge is just opposite St Thomas' Hospital, one of the medical institutions threatened by ConDem privatisation, and looming in view are the Houses of Parliament, where the Health and Social Care Bill is due to have its Second Reading in the Lords. The bill itself was not in either the Conservative or the Liberal Democrat election manifesto.

Despite the urgency of the threats to the NHS, the demonstrators were relaxed and enjoying themselves, many dressed as nurses, doctors, or patients. Many had set up workshops or talks on the bridge. However, others were becoming frustrated with the lack of action from a group that bases itself on the promise of direct involvement, and felt it wasn't enough to sit around and discuss.

A sizeable group broke away at around 5pm, headed by

Black Block Anarchists and UK Uncut activists from Nottingham, in order to try and occupy nearby Lambeth Bridge and create a more notable disturbance. They reached the end of Lambeth Bridge before being kettled in a small space.

Eggs and glass bottles were thrown by individuals. But generally morale was high. One activist brought out his guitar and started playing "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life", starting a spontaneous sing-along and prompting curious tourists to take photos and videos. People within the kettle started chanting and chatting, and the tension relaxed, until the police were having to force people to get out of the kettle. There were no arrests.

Overall, the demonstration was very good. There was not as much civil disobedience as some may have hoped for, but many people stopped and started chatting and got involved.

Emily Muna

health care free at the point of use, but some Tory advisers are forthright.

Mark Britnell, recruited by the government as an adviser on the changes it will force through in the Health Service (*Nursing Times*, 3 May), has said:

"In the future, the NHS will be a state insurance provider, not a state deliverer... The NHS will be shown no mercy and the best time to take advantage of this will be in the next couple of years" (*Guardian*, 14 May).

In the *Health Service Journal* (11 May), Britnell has proposed Singapore as a model: "the government [...] provide people with a sort of individual savings account that enables them to take greater personal responsibility. The central provident fund enables people to pay for their own housing, pensions, healthcare and even their children's tertiary education".

At the same time, the Government demands that the NHS make £20 billion "efficiency savings" by 2015.

With more NHS money finding its way into private hands and being squandered on reorganisation and on the overhead costs of complex market mechanisms, that will mean real cuts in care.

• For more about campaigning to save the NHS: www.keepournhspublic.com.

Wednesday 9 November

National students' day of action against the Education White Paper, cuts and fees

National demonstration

Assemble: 12 noon, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

More: NCAFC, <http://anticuts.com>, or tel. 07775 763750

Supported by NUS

The biggest strike

By Ira Berkovic

Not since the General Strike of 1926 has there been any comparable move by so many unions to strike together on the same day. 30 November is shaping up to be one of the biggest strikes in the history of the British labour movement, drawing in many workers who have never struck before.

The big local government and health union Unison will send out ballot papers from 11 October, to be returned by 3 November.

The teachers' union EIS and the head teachers' organisation NAHT have already sent out ballot papers for strike action against pension cuts on 30 November. Six other unions hold live ballot mandates from action on or since 30 June: NUT, UCU, ATL, PCS, Unison in Northern Ireland, and the Welsh teachers' union UCAC.

The teachers' union NASUWT and the Northern Ireland public service union NIPSA are balloting for action short of strikes as well as for strike action. The NASUWT ballot opens on 4 November and closes on 17 November. The NIPSA ballot opens on 10 October.

The historically right-wing union Prospect, which has not balloted for 27 years, has a ballot opening on 24 October and closing on 14 November. NAHT has never struck before in its 114-year history, but sent out ballot papers on 29 September.

SCHEDULE

Other unions have announced their intention to strike over pensions but have not yet fixed a ballot schedule.

Those are: the Royal College of Nursing, the First Division Association, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, the Fire Brigades Union, and (for their members in public sector pension schemes) two other giant unions, Unite and GMB.

Workers' Liberty members have produced a model motion (see below) for activists to use in their union branches or trades council. It makes the case for a creative, ongoing strategy for the pensions fight that builds mechanisms of grass-roots control so union members can take ownership over their own dispute.

It is only with such a strategy — a strategy of mass participation, rank-and-file democracy and industrial action designed to apply maximum pressure and force concessions — that the potential of 30 November can be maximised.

Thought should also be given to how the public sector pensions battle can intersect with ongoing fights in the private sector, such as the electricians' campaign against pay cuts and the Fujitsu IT workers' struggle. Delegates from those disputes should also participate in strike committees set up to build for 30 November. There is no particular industrial reason why construction contractors will be put under more pressure if electricians strike on 30 November than if they strike on any other day, so a fetish should not be made out of simply striking on the same day, but public-private solidarity should be built and, wherever coordination makes industrial sense, it should be sought.

Already, Trades Councils in Cambridge, Nottingham and Brighton are building for the strike day on the basis of building mass participation and rank-and-file control. Other labour movement bodies should do the same.

ADDITION

That rank-and-file organising will be a necessary addition to what the union head offices do. GMB, a general union with over 300,000 members in public sector pensions schemes, did not participate in the 30 June strike, but its leaders have made explicit statements about the need for sustained action.

Brian Strutton, the GMB's national public services secretary, speaks of a "long, hard and dirty dispute" that runs "for a long time" — "rolling into next summer".

The GMB has made it clear that its ballot will give the union a mandate to take action beyond 30 November. It is right to seek that mandate. A strategy that sees 30 November as an isolated, single day of protest action has no chance of forcing concessions from the government.

Unfortunately, the union's press office says that the timetable for a ballot is yet to be released and the union is still undertaking the "huge job" of getting its membership records in sufficient order to comply with the anti-union laws. The GMB's Southern region has offered members a £30 stipend to staff phone-banks for checking membership

records.

The "all hands on deck" spirit is admirable, but you wonder what the union's paid functionaries (many of them much better paid than the workers they are supposed to represent) have been doing in the 17 months since the Coalition took office and quickly made its plans clear. You also wonder how far the officials can be trusted to run the dispute adequately.

Unite, the other large general union with members in the public sector which did not strike on 30 June, announced on 14 September that it would ballot its 250,000 public sector members. A union source told *Solidarity* that a timetable for the ballot was "imminent", but that there was no public information about what kind of action Unite would be balloting for (one-day strike, "discontinuous" action, "action short of strike" as well as strikes?).

At Labour Party conference, Unite leader Len McCluskey told a caucus of Unite delegates that he was still open to the possibility of not taking action if progress is made in negotiations. Since negotiations have been going on for months without progress, McCluskey's statement gives signals of uncertainty.

More scandalously, Unison's head of health Christina McAnea appeared at the recent Tory party conference to announce that "as a union, it's not our job to fight against every single [hospital] closure."

When union leaders display such a cavalier attitude to the potential closure of workplaces, trade union members can hardly be expected to trust those leaders to protect their pensions.

Activists must fight for democratic reform in their unions to make sure people like McAnea and McCluskey are reined in and made accountable to union members.

LOGISTICS

Unlike some of the other unions, Unite and GMB have balloted for strikes before, and recently. But never on this scale, and across such a number and variety of workplaces.

The logistics are difficult. Union officials are worried that bosses will pick on small irregularities in the balloting procedure (such as ballot papers sent to workers who have retired or moved to different jobs). On the precedent of the BA dispute and other cases, the bosses could use very small errors of that sort to get a court injunction against the strike.

But the essential defence against that is political and industrial. No amount of record-checking will eliminate all errors in ballots of this size.

The employers will use their laws and their courts to block the strike if they think they can easily get away with it, and not use them if they think that the outrageous unfairness of using the courts will provoke such an angry response from workers as to make the court gambit counterproductive from the point of view of the employers and the government.

The answer to the threat is an energetic, visible public campaign for "fair pensions for all", maximising workers' confidence in themselves and in the justice of their case.

For union officials instead to be closeted in record-checking, and stressing to activists the shakiness of the union's position, risks deflating momentum and morale and leaving most union members in the dark about what their leaders are doing.

Trade union activists need to fight inside their unions for strategies that can win. That means making sure ballots give the union mandates for escalating action beyond 30 November.

No tactic should go unconsidered; the Southampton council dispute has shown the potential for rolling and selective action to mobilise workers. Workers whose action could have the biggest impact on employers' revenue streams struck selectively to put maximum pressure on council bosses. A similar approach should be considered in public sector workplaces across the country following on from 30 November.

Rapid escalation should also be considered, giving workers the potential to strike for a greater length of time each week or fortnight in quick succession.

And other tactics, such as sit-down strikes (occupations) and wildcat actions, should not be ruled out either. Len Mc-

Pass this motion in your branch!

AWL members have produced the following model motion for use in trade union branches, Trades Councils and other labour movement bodies. It sets out a rank-and-file strategy for the run-up to the 30 November strike, and beyond. To download the motion in PDF format, see tinyurl.com/strikemodelmotion.

This branch believes:

1. To win the pensions battle, the labour movement will need to mobilise on a scale not seen for a generation.
2. It will take more than isolated, one-day protest strikes to beat the government. Sustained strike action as well as rolling and selective strikes will be needed.
3. For workers to feel confident to take the sustained industrial action necessary, they must have ownership over their own struggle. A successful strike movement cannot be built without mass, active participation.

This branch further believes:

1. The labour movement must articulate a political alternative to the Coalition, on pensions and other questions, based on taxation of the rich, public ownership, democratic control and, ultimately, a fight for a workers' government — a government based on, accountable to and governing in the interests of the working class, in the same way that the current government governs in the interests of the rich.

This branch resolves:

1. To work with other union branches and the Trades Council to set up a cross-union strike committee, open to delegates from all striking unions, to build for 30 November and action beyond.
2. To use such a strike committee to organise effective picketing on 30 November and a local strikers' assembly, which will discuss strategy, in addition to any rallies/marches on the strike day itself.
3. To set up a local strike levy to supplement and add to any national hardship fund.
4. To demand that our union leaders immediately name a timetable of escalating action after 30 November into the New Year.
5. To demand that our union's national negotiators keep the membership informed as to the content of all ongoing negotiations.
6. To support others taking action against the cuts, including the student demonstrations against fees and cuts in London on 9 November.

Future issues of *Solidarity* will report on branches and Trades Councils that have passed this motion, a version of it, or other motions advocating similar strategies.

since 1926



Is This as Good as it Gets?

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Southampton city council workers show how to organise. Rally, 6 October

Cluskey and GMB leader Paul Kenny have spoken of the need for campaigns of direct action and "civil disobedience"; they should be held to their words and called on to support workers taking that kind of action.

Some union leaders will need to be pushed just to go half as far. NASUWT leaders, for example, have put the emphasis on the "action short of a strike" section of its ballot, making activists fear that the leaders are angling for a resounding vote for action short and only a narrow majority for strikes, and a get-out clause from striking.

Even union leaders considered left-wing have been slack about agitating to build the action. In the National Union of Teachers, local reps in some areas, like Nottingham, have produced materials for activists to use in schools, but it's had to be organised and driven locally, and the national union leaders should be doing more.

Few unions have spelled out exactly what their demands are in the dispute. Sally Hunt, general secretary of the Univer-

sity and College Union, when speaking about the dispute over the University Superannuation Scheme, has posed things simply in terms of getting bosses back around the negotiating table. Others are vague. None has organised a thorough and democratic discussion among union members about what the precise demands should be.

The announcement from Trades Union Congress on 14 September of the proposed mass strike action on 30 November had the potential to dazzle. It was right to respond enthusiastically, and stress demands for the union leaders to deliver on their militant promises, rather than sourly muttering that it could all come to little; but wrong to imagine the train towards a "big bang" showdown with the government was set irreversibly in motion by that mere announcement.

Union activists should seize on the union leaders' moves towards action, and demand they follow them through; but also organise independently and democratically at rank-and-file level.

Building a strike movement in Brighton

A GMB activist in Brighton reports on how workers there have been organising for the strike.

Our strike committee has met twice so far. We have extended it to other unions; we did not want to be divided along public/private lines.

It has worked well; the bus workers' branch of Unite turned up and told how they had already passed a motion in that any bus routes that are expected to cross picket lines on the 30th will not be run.

We have already designed and are printing joint union literature. People identified workplaces that may get a low turnout or yes vote, and we have split these workplaces up between us all to do shifts of leafleting. We all pledged to hold workplace meetings once a week, to discuss what has been happening, answer questions, get feedback and share information.

My GMB branch and the Unison Local Government branch are holding two joint open meetings for all members to discuss further our plans for the day. We have invited Southampton Council workers to come and speak at

the meeting about how their action is going, how they are organising themselves, and how we can help. We are putting on two public meetings in town so residents can hear from workers why they are striking.

For the day, we've identified isolated workplaces where there will only be a few strikers, so we are going to share our members out everywhere, to ensure strong and active picket lines and to ensure those isolated workplaces feel supported.

There are then going to be feeder marches — we are all going to leave our workplaces at the same time and pick up others on the way, to all converge at the Level (a big open playing field in the middle of town). Here, a strikers' assembly will take place as we wait for everyone to finally arrive.

We have agreed to have no big-name speakers at the rally (although apparently Caroline Lucas [Green Party] wants to come and speak, which we are going to vote on this week). We will have various different workers explaining what the dispute means to them. We are trying to get a cross-section of speakers.

Is This as Good as it Gets?

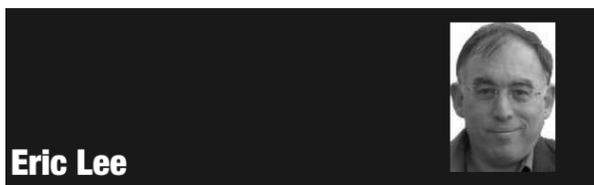
Speaker tour

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**www.workersliberty.org/feministtour
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Back in the USSR



Eric Lee

Last month I sent out a mailing to LabourStart's 75,000 subscribers asking people to support the struggles of striking oil workers in Kazakhstan and at a steel company in Georgia. As these were both former Soviet republics, I gave the message the subject of line "Back in the USSR?".

I was quoting the Beatles song, of course, but I also wanted to point out that the increasing repression of independent trade unions in the post-Soviet era was a throw-back to the dark days of Stalinism.

The last thing I expected was to become the target of a wave of angry emails from unrepentant Stalinists.

One writer told me, "Your picture labelled 'Back in the USSR' is the opposite of what it was — free education, health, cheap clothing and food. They were building a Utopia until they were sold out."

Another said, "Contrarily to what you say... growingly the proletariat and the Soviet People want the return to the Soviet Union with the orientation of Lenin and Stalin (1917-1953)."

A third added, "This... is, frankly un-called for and outdated Cold War bullshit... The standard of living has gone down drastically since the fall of the USSR and workers' rights have eroded."

There were dozens more like this. I didn't take the time to answer them — life is too short — but I shared them with some of the senior correspondents at LabourStart. One of them, who was born and raised in the USSR, wrote that he had no nostalgia for those days.

RIGHTS

"Workers had no rights," he said, "beside the right to demonstrate how much they liked the Politburo on May Day and enjoyed CPSU propaganda."

"Today the elites of all those former USSR countries want to deprive our rights again. In this sense 'back to the USSR' is a correct description of what's going on in Kazakhstan and Georgia. As well as in Russia, Ukraine, etc."

Now this will be obvious to the readers of this newspaper, but apparently there are people out there, active in our unions, who believe that a Utopia was being built in the USSR until 1991, that workers had more rights under totalitarianism than they have now, and that there is a desperate craving to go back to the old system.

Who are these people? Obviously some will be old Stalinists who never understood what life was really like back in the USSR. George Galloway is probably in this category and said back in 2002, "I think the disappearance of the Soviet Union is the biggest catastrophe of my life."

But others, I fear, may be younger people who have no idea what the Soviet Union was like and who are being exposed to a kind of revisionist history that assumes that whatever preceded today's rotten gangster capitalism in Russia must have been much better.

One is tempted to dismiss all this as the ranting of some cranks, which in some cases it obviously is, but nostalgia for the USSR is part of the poison on the left that also leads to uncritical support for the Castro dictatorship and the Chavez regime — support that goes largely unchallenged in British unions.

We can talk all we want about what's wrong with Cuba and Venezuela, but so long as large numbers of people in the labour movement are delusional about the Soviet Union, our work will be much harder.

Knowledge that many of us take for granted — such as the complete ban on independent trade unions and strikes in the Stalinist countries — must be shared with a new generation of activists.

And this is true not least because we cannot support our comrades on the front lines in Georgia and Kazakhstan if we have illusions about the regime that was — thankfully — overthrown there two decades ago.

Karl Marx on credit and crisis

Colin Foster reviews Karl Marx's arguments, in volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital*, on why capitalist crises manifest themselves as credit crises

In discussing fixed capital, Marx refers to growing "pressure on the money-market" as a factor in the downfall of capitalist booms.

"If we conceive society as being not capitalistic but communistic, there will be no money-capital at all in the first place, not the disguises cloaking the transactions arising on account of it. The question then comes down to the need of society to calculate beforehand how much labour, means of production, and means of subsistence it can invest, without detriment, in such lines of business as for instance the building of railways, which do not furnish any means of production or subsistence, nor produce any useful effect for a long time, a year or more, while they extract labour, means of production and means of subsistence from the total annual production.

"In capitalist society however where social reason always asserts itself only post festum [after the event], great disturbances may and must constantly occur [as a result of surges of fixed capital investment]. On the one hand pressure is brought to bear on the money-market, while on the other, an easy money-market calls such enterprises into being en masse, thus creating the very circumstances which later give rise to pressure on the money-market. Pressure is brought to bear on the money-market, since large advances of money-capital are constantly needed here for long periods of time..."

"A band of speculators, contractors, engineers, lawyers, etc., enrich themselves... This lasts until the inevitable crash." (*Capital* volume 2)

In *Capital* volume 3 Marx further discusses credit.

Credit develops necessarily within capitalism:

- to facilitate the movement of capital from one sector to another, i.e. to allow the equalisation of the rate of profit;
- to reduce the costs of circulation;
- to speed up the movement of capital through its different phases, or indeed to make it possible as a continuous process; and to increase the scope for the expansion of capital;
- to pool together all that would otherwise rest in individual reserve funds, and to give to money-capital "the form of social capital" concentrated in the hands of banks.

ELASTICITY

Thus the credit system gives greater elasticity both to capitalist production — and to capitalist overproduction.

"The credit system appears as the main lever of over-production and over-speculation in commerce... the reproduction process, which is elastic by nature, is here forced to its extreme limits... The credit system accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world-market... At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this contradiction — crises — and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production."

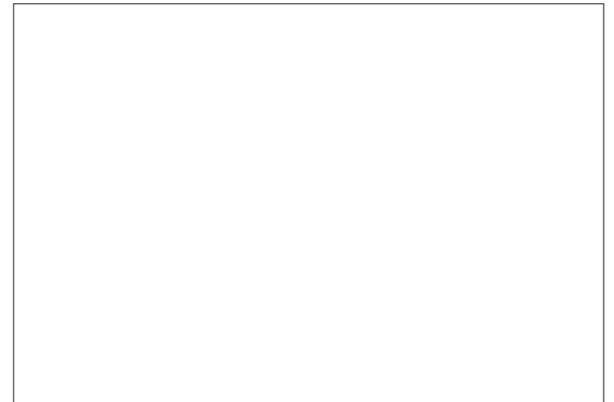
In chapter 30 of *Capital* volume 3 Marx describes the typical pattern of the boom-slump cycle.

"After the reproduction process has again reached that state of prosperity which precedes that of over-exertion, commercial credit becomes very much extended [i.e. trade credit between capitalist firms is easy and extensive]... The rate of interest is still low, although it rises above its minimum..."

"[But] those cavaliers who work without any reserve capital or without any capital at all and thus operate completely on a money credit basis begin to appear... in considerable numbers."

"To this is now added the great expansion of fixed capital in all forms, and the opening of new enterprises on a vast and far-reaching scale. The interest now rises to its average level. It reaches its maximum again as soon as the new crisis sets in..."

"Credit suddenly stops then... the reproduction process is paralysed, and... a superabundance of idle industrial capital appears side by side with an almost absolute absence of loan capital..."



"A band of speculators"

"The industrial cycle is of such a nature that the same circuit must periodically reproduce itself, once the first impulse has been given. During a period of slack, production sinks below the level which it had attained in the preceding cycle and for which the technical basis has now been laid. During prosperity — the middle period — it continues to develop on this basis. In the period of over-production and exertion, it strains the productive forces to the utmost, until it exceeds the capitalistic limits of the production process."

CRISIS

But why do the contradictions express themselves in a sudden crisis and not in gradual corrections? Because a decline of credit is by its very nature self-multiplying — no capitalist can afford to offer easy credit when others are tightening — and comes at a point when many business failures or outright swindles have developed and remain hidden only because of easy credit.

"In a system of production, where the entire continuity of the reproduction process rests upon credit, a crisis must obviously occur — a tremendous rush for means of payment — when credit suddenly ceases and only cash payments have validity. At first glance... the whole crisis seems to be merely a credit and money crisis... But the majority of these bills [bills of exchange, or invoices, which cannot be converted into cash] represent actual sales and purchases, whose extension far beyond the needs of society is... the basis of the whole crisis". [By "needs", here, Marx means effective market demand, not human needs].

"The whole process becomes so complicated [with a developed credit system]... that the semblance of a very solvent business with a smooth flow of returns can easily persist even long after returns actually come in only at the expense of swindled money-lenders and partly of swindled producers. Thus business always appears almost excessively sound right on the eve of a crash... Business is always thoroughly sound and the campaign in full swing, until suddenly the debacle takes place".

And again: "It is a basic principle of capitalist production that money, as an independent form of value, stands in opposition to commodities, or that exchange-value must assume an independent form in money... [Thus] in times of a squeeze, when credit contracts... money suddenly stands as the only means of payment and true existence of value in absolute opposition to all other commodities..."

"Secondly, however, credit-money itself is only money to the extent that it absolutely takes the place of actual money to the amount of its nominal value. With a drain on gold its convertibility, i.e. its identity with actual gold, becomes problematic. Hence coercive measures, raising the rate of interest, etc., for the purpose of safeguarding the conditions of this convertibility. This can be carried more or less to extremes by mistaken legislation..."

"The basis, however, is given with the basis of the mode of production itself. A depreciation of credit-money... would unsettle all existing relations. Therefore, the value of commodities is sacrificed for the purpose of safeguarding the fantastic and independent existence of this value in money..."

"For a few millions in money, many millions in commodities must therefore be sacrificed. This is inevitable under capitalist production and constitutes one of its beauties".

Permanent revolution needs workers' organisation

Paul Hampton reviews *Michael Löwy, The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (Haymarket 2010)

Trotsky warned against turning permanent revolution into a “superhistorical master-key” applicable to all societies in all circumstances. He rejected a “theological” conception of permanent revolution. Sadly, since Trotsky’s death in 1940, most would-be Trotskyists have subscribed to the label while hollowing out the perspective.

The original version of this book, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* by Michael Löwy (1981) became the standard text on permanent revolution for “orthodox” Trotskyists. Now Part One and the conclusion of the book have been reprinted by Haymarket Books, together with a short recent interview. It should have come with a health warning: if anyone believes the distinctive conclusions offered by Löwy, then they will fail to understand Trotsky, as well as the events of the 20th-century, never mind what might lie ahead in the 21st.

The book discusses Marx and Engels’ views on permanent revolution. Löwy is right that Marx and Engels did not have a “coherent and systematic” theory of permanent revolution — the ideas appear in chrysalis form, “as a series of brilliant but unsystematised intuitions”. This was because although they lived through and charted the era in which the bourgeoisie ceased to play a revolutionary role, they also understood the immaturity of the proletariat during their time, which was overcome only fleetingly towards the end of their lives.

The chapter on Trotsky’s first cut of permanent revolution in 1905 is in need of revision in the light of Day and Gaido’s book, *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution* (2011). Löwy states that permanent revolution was “a bold and original break from the evolutionist Marxism of the Second International” (2010 p.1). He claims that the term “permanent revolution” was “otherwise virtually extinct in the vocabulary of the Second International”. He acknowledges that Trotsky’s conception of a workers’ government in Russia “was shared by Parvus, Luxemburg and, more intermittently, by Lenin as well”. But he is dismissive of Kautsky and Mehring, and makes no reference to Ryazanov.

RUSSIA

Trotsky’s originality lay in the demand, not simply for a workers’ government in Russia, but that the workers go on to make a socialist revolution, overthrow the tsarist state and institute workers’ self-rule.

Trotsky generalised permanent revolution to the entire colonial and semi-colonial (or ex-colonial) world after the upsurge of the Chinese class struggle in 1925-27.

The Chinese working class appeared on the cusp of taking power in the major cities, until thwarted by Stalin’s self-limitation of the revolution to the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang’s army then drowned the workers’ revolution in blood. As such China (1925-27) as well as Spain (1936-39) proved permanent revolution negatively: without Marxist leadership even a fantastically militant working class movement could not complete its own socialist revolution and take power. He praises Trotsky’s “foresight, the accuracy of his predictions and the strategic truth of his warnings” on China as “unquestionable”.

However, Löwy is keen to “correct” Trotsky even at this stage. He states that Trotsky can “rightly be adjudged guilty of the error of ‘sociologism’”, in relation to the Chinese revolution in 1949. Then, the Maoist-Stalinist party-army defeated Chiang through rural guerrilla warfare and then took control of the cities, without (and indeed against) the involvement of the workers.

Löwy argues that “what occurred in Russia, Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba corresponded closely to Trotsky’s central thesis: the possibility of an uninterrupted and combined (democratic/socialist) revolution in a ‘backward’, dependent or colonial country”. He at least acknowledges that in Russia in 1917 the working class was the principal actor and led by genuine Marxists. He also baldly states that in China, Vietnam and Yugoslavia and Cuba “not only was the proletariat not directly the social agent of revolution, but the revolutionary party was not the direct, organic expression of the proletariat”.

Students and workers demonstrate for democracy in Tiananmen Square, 1989

However, Löwy’s assessment of Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba is completely wrong. He states that: “All the post-1917 revolutions, therefore, can be designated as ‘proletarian’ only indirectly, by the nature of the political leadership of the revolutionary process”. He believes that the Communist Parties that led the first three were “working class”, despite that fact that on coming to power they crushed all independent organisation by the actually-existing working classes they ruled. Although he points to the bureaucracy as a ruling layer (but not ruling class), he still designates these states as “proletarian”, albeit deformed.

None of these revolutions was headed by the working class — in fact in each case the working-class forces and the genuine Marxists had first been routed, and in some cases actually physically liquidated.

Worse, these revolutions were headed from the start by Stalinists whose project was to create a society on the model of the USSR — a model in which the working class was atomised and completely disenfranchised. In fact, these social revolutions had nothing to do with permanent revolution, because the working class was not the principal actor and because working class socialists were largely absent or unable to provide the necessary alternative leadership.

STALINISM

In a note of contrition, in the recent interview appended to the book, Löwy half-heartedly repudiates his view of Stalinism as capable of leading the permanent revolution; he does not reject his other serious revisions of Trotsky’s original theory.

Löwy states that “the revolutionary role of the peasantry is simply a huge historical fact that occupies a central place in the unfolding dynamic of revolution in the 20th century”. He states that Trotsky was correct in insisting that “the peasantry could only play a consistent revolutionary role under proletarian and communist leadership” — but this can only be true if you pretend that the Stalinist party-armies in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cuba were somehow working class.

Löwy is on firmer ground when he wrote that Trotsky underestimated the potential of the Indian bourgeoisie to win independence and to create a parliamentary democracy. However, Trotsky was perfectly well aware that in the absence of a powerful organised working class movement, the self-conscious bourgeoisie would continue to rule, to evolve and develop its reach. In the midst of the chaos of capitalism after World War One, he stated that if the workers could not take power, then capital would find a way to new stability and expansion on the backs of the workers.

He also developed a nuanced account of both Bonapartism and of fascism, which helps explain the forms of rule of less-developed countries during the 20th century.

In his earliest writings on permanent revolution, Trotsky argued that: “The state is no end in itself. It is, however, the

greatest means of organising, disorganising, and re-organising social relations” (Day and Gaido, 2011 p.502).

In reality the 20th century is studded with revolutions in which the working class played a crucial role.

Germany and Hungary in 1919, China (1925-27), Spain (1936-39), Hungary (1956), France (1968), Chile (1973), Portugal (1974-75), Iran (1978-79) and Poland (1980). More recently, one might argue that the events in China (1989) and in Indonesia (1998) had elements of permanent revolution, where the working class played a leading role.

What these revolutions have in common is that the working class was thwarted from making a socialist revolution, even where it had succeeded in shaking (and in certain cases), threatening the existing (bourgeois or Stalinist) states.

ABORTED

Permanent revolution was aborted, even where powerful mass organisations of workers (councils, cordones or shoras) were created or where mass strikes and new militant unions were created.

A key explanation in all these revolutions is that the working class lacked a Marxist leadership capable of charting a strategy for self-emancipation. Similarly, in Tunisia and Egypt this year, the working class played a critical role in shaking the old regime and, in the latter case, toppling a dictator. However, neither has yet been able to shatter the old armed forces or shatter the state bureaucracy.

There is still the potential for a permanentist logic to the class struggle in the Middle East revolutions — but not unless working class organisation can be built and unless genuine Marxism is able to flourish. Helping the new labour movements and the Marxists grow and thrive is the central strategic task for socialists who advocate permanent revolution.

The wider relevance of permanent revolution concerns the continued need for the working class movement to fight for the wider goals of universal human liberation. The working class in every capitalist (or Stalinist) state still needs to fight for democracy, against national and other forms of oppression and indeed for wider goals such as tackling climate change.

The working class must lead other basic exploited classes in the struggle not just for socialism but for general freedom. It must act as a universal class, in Marx’s formulation.

Löwy is right that the struggle to prevent dangerous climate change is analogous to permanent revolution, in that it requires working class leadership and, ultimately, working class revolution.

Permanent revolution is ultimately a perspective of working-class-led emancipatory politics. But to play that role, we need to slough off the baggage that has been grafted onto the theory.

Steve Jobs and iDolatry

By Jérôme E Roos

Observing the sudden outpouring of sentimentalism, there is no doubt that the passing of Steve Jobs has struck a chord in our collective commodity fetishism...

Steve Jobs... was the man who offered the bourgeois intelligentsia of the West a way to keep consuming while still being able to hold on to the illusion of being a hippie. In the process, Jobs took our age-old commodity fetish to a whole new level...

Wielding an iPhone was no longer just a matter of utility or an affirmation of status — it became an act of rebellion. Against what, nobody knew. But “thinking different” felt great.

No obituary better exemplified this idolatry than the one in the *Economist*.

Aptly branding him “The Magician”, the paragon of free-market ideology celebrated Jobs as a “man who liked to see himself as a hippie, permanently in revolt against big companies,” but who “ended up being hailed by many of those corporate giants as one of the greatest chief executives of all time”...

Apple is now the biggest publicly traded company in the world. But what does this mean?

Is Apple really representative of a new era in human history? Or is it just the same wine in a slightly fancier bottle? Does Apple really hover in some kind of post-material, post-industrial universe? Or are we deluding ourselves into thinking that capitalism took a major turn for the better, and progressive business has set us free from the scourges of Dickensian industrialism?

Well, as an answer to that question... perhaps we should consider the following — all taken from headlines in the *Guardian* over the past year or so:

- Apple’s Chinese workers treated “inhumanely, like machines”
- Apple report reveals child labour increase
- Apple’s annual report says 91 children worked at its suppliers in 2010, and 137 workers were poisoned by n-hexane
- Apple named “least green” tech company
- Greenpeace report puts Apple at bottom of green league table due to reliance on coal at data centres
- Apple says it has never tracked the locations of iPhones and iPads, but admits a software fault means data is still sent to the company...

COMMODITY FETISHISM

Once we see all the uncritical admiration of Steve Jobs in this context, it becomes obvious to what extent our minds are still perverted by the commodity fetish.

As Marx put it in *Capital*, “commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.” David Harvey explained the phenomenon as follows:

“The advent of a money economy, Marx argues, dissolves the bonds and relations that make up ‘traditional,’ communities so that ‘money becomes the real community’.

“We move from a social condition, in which we depend directly on those we know personally, to one in which we depend on impersonal and objective relations with others... Money and market exchange draws a veil over, ‘masks’ social relationships between things. This condition Marx calls ‘the fetishism of commodities.’”

When we walk into an iStore, what we see is a “sexy little machine”, not a product that was created by the toiling labour of Chinese children working 80 hours a week for \$1 per hour while being poisoned with chemicals and seeing their environment deteriorate around them.

Steve Jobs (1955-2011), founder and long-time CEO of Apple, Inc., passed away today at the age of 56. He is survived by a net worth of \$8.3 billion and the largest publicly traded company in the world. May he rest in peace.

- Abridged from roarmag.org

Can you have Marxism without dialectics?

By Bruce Robinson

Relatively little of Dave Osler’s column [Solidarity 219] suggesting that Marxists should abandon dialectics deals with the substance of the issue — what dialectics is and why it is wrong.

Instead we are treated to a collection of admittedly bad examples of how it has been used on the left “to promote arrant nonsense” and assertions that it is “mumbo jumbo” and “methodologically weak”. He instead states that Marxists should adopt formal logic and follow G. A. Cohen’s version of Analytical Marxism. I’ll try to give a brief introduction to why dialectics shouldn’t be dumped and the problems with the alternative Dave proposes.

Dialectics is a way of understanding the world, which focuses centrally on the concepts of change, interconnection, contradiction and on breaking reality down into chunks which incorporate the essential relationships which define them. The term contradiction is not to be understood in its everyday sense of the relationship between two irreconcilable opposites but the tension and conflict that occurs within and between the different components of reality as they develop. Contradiction is thus the motive force of change in dialectics.

RICHNESS

As Trotsky puts it: “Dialectical thinking gives to concepts, by means of closer approximations, corrections, concretisation, a richness of content and flexibility; I would even say ‘a succulence’ which to a certain extent brings them closer to living phenomena.”

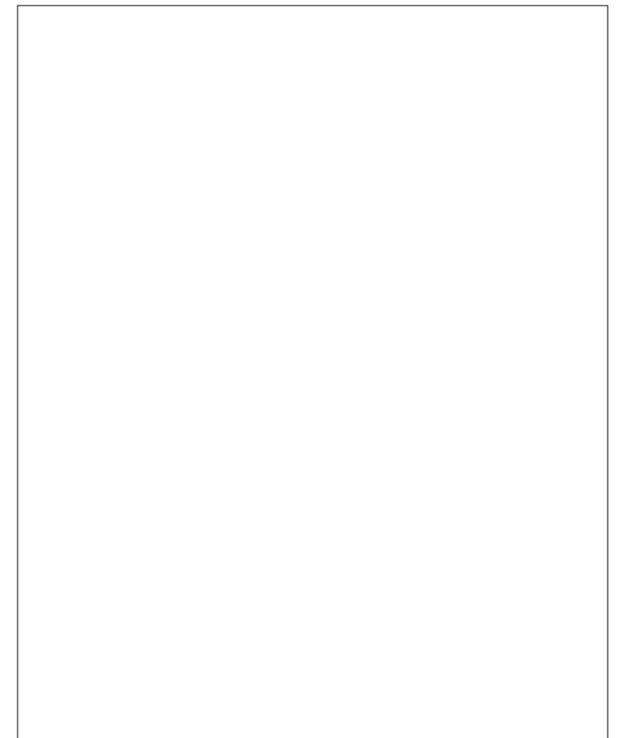
It enables us to grasp human and natural phenomena in their context, development and interconnections rather than as isolated and static elements to which larger units should be reduced. (This is the technical meaning of the term “analysis” as used in Dave’s article.)

It is thus distinct both from the common sense reasoning we take for granted in our daily lives and from the formalised reasoning found in mathematics and symbolic logic, though, despite the claims of wilder Marxists, it does not and cannot imply a complete rejection of either.

I would go one step further than this and say that the reason dialectical forms of thought give a richer picture is because the real world of nature and society is dialectical and that dialectics is therefore more than a system of thought, a research method or a mode of presentation. (I recognise this is just an assertion but there isn’t space to give examples.)

This is a view much argued about even by Marxists who do accept dialectics but is, I think, both necessary for the coherence of the argument that it gives a better picture of reality and is in line with Marx’s remark that “the ideal [i.e. the world of ideas] is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man and translated into forms of thought.”

Which brings us to a major problem Dave does not confront in his article, namely that his real opponent is not John Rees or Gerry Healy but Karl Marx, who remained convinced of the principles of dialectics as a basis for his own work, though he sadly never managed to carry out his offer to set down its principles simply and systematically in six



Karl Marx

folio pages.

There are clear evidence for this though, both in *Capital* and in remarks made throughout his career.

I have no reason to think Dave wishes to abandon basic Marxist ideas such as the labour theory of value. Yet he thinks “they appear to be built on methodologically weak foundations”. The challenge for him then is to demonstrate that one can arrive at the same conclusions by a different method.

Enter G. A. Cohen and the school he helped found known as “Analytical Marxism” (AM), which originated from a group of academics in the late 1970s and 80s, though it now seems to have pretty much disappeared.

AM argues that Marxism doesn’t need its own method but needs instead to use the methods of Analytical Philosophy — the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy in the 20th century — and of mainstream positivist social science.

One of its adherents, Philippe van Parijs, says that AM “consists in... using conventional conceptual analysis, formal logic and mathematics, econometric methods and the other tools of statistical and historical research — in order to tackle the broad range of positive and normative issues broached in Marx’s work... Formal models resting on assumption of individually rational behaviour, as instantiated by neo-classical economic theory and the theory of strategic games, can be used to understand the economic and political dynamics of capitalist societies.”

INDIVIDUAL

The focus on rational individual behaviour follows from the need of analytic philosophy to find a secure elementary starting point that can be described in terms that approximate to the rigour of formal logic.

The problem for the project is that this methodological basis leads to substantive conclusions that cannot be reconciled with Marx’s theories.

AM has held to its methods and successively ditched or redefined more and more Marxist concepts and categories so that both friends and critics question whether the ethical commitment to justice many adherents arrived at is distinctly Marxist. Van Parijs candidly states that its development “has arguably brought analytical Marxism considerably closer to left liberal social thought than to the bulk of explicitly Marxist thought”.

Is this relevant to Dave’s criticism of dialectics? I think it is, in two ways. It shows that the conceptual and methodological tools we choose to understand the world are not neutral in relation to what we are trying to understand. They tend to make us look at the world in particular ways which may or may not be appropriate.

It also makes me think that Marx’s commitment to dialectical thinking was not an aberration or something that can be detached from the rest of his ideas.

G. A. Cohen’s final book

Pickets can win construction fight

Michael Dooley, a construction worker and left candidate for the General Secretary position of construction union UCATT, spoke to *Solidarity* about the issues facing construction workers and the ongoing electricians' campaign against pay cuts.

The recent period has been one of decline and retreat from the point of view of trade union organisation within the industry.

The electricians are one of the last trades with anything like a high level of organisation. Overall union density is probably less than 10%. However, the level of support for trade union ethos — collective organisation and campaigning — is much higher. You will find non-union members, self-employed workers and agency staff expressing support for trade union ideas.

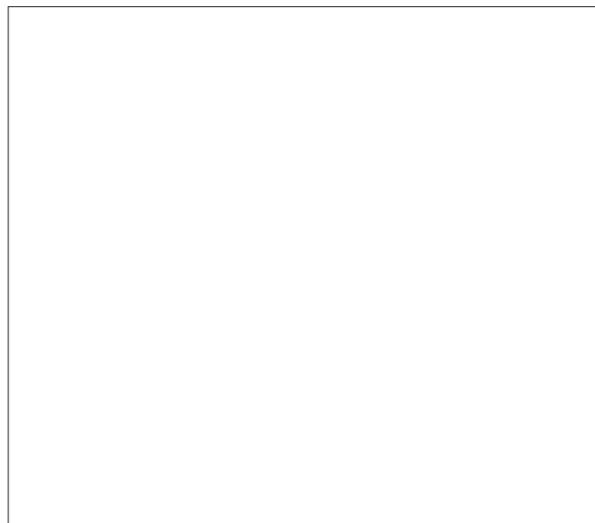
The construction industry has always been transient. However, in the past a job may have taken four years to complete, which gave unions time to build up organisation in a traditional way. Modern construction design allow similar projects to be completed in two years or less

so a lot of those old approaches to organising are redundant. New tactics need to be developed, such as campaigns which focus on organising workers in their communities as well as on sites.

Unions need to develop a profile in communities so that when a construction worker goes to a new site they'll be familiar with the union from its work in their community, and may already be a member. It's about coupling a community presence with an assertive industrial approach and using industrial muscle to support communities. Other methods include trade or group specific organising, geographical area specific or company-wide organising.

A construction workers' union run along those lines would run disputes on every site. There's an endless list issues to organise around, from low pay to safety to bullying, which is rife in the industry. Because of the incredibly tight time-frames now common in the industry, the employers can't afford any disruption, so even a small group of well-organised worker can have immense power.

I am fighting to transform UCATT into that kind of union and this the



Michael Dooley gives a reading from *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* at a recent rally

platform on which I'm standing in the General Secretary election, which begins on 11 November. There are three other candidates not seen as left, and myself as the left candidate. I've got a history of unwavering militancy; I'm the only candidate to have been seriously blacklisted by construction employers and I think I'm the candidate who construction bosses would most fear. I've been involved in the campaign of the electricians — who are mainly in Unite — in a supportive capacity. I've got experience so I think I can offer

solidarity and assistance, but I'm not trying to tell members of another union what to do.

Ultimately I think that campaign needs a level of direct action that official trade unions simply aren't able to organise. Building sites are well-oiled machines running to very tight timetables. If those timetables fall behind, even slightly, trade contractors can put forward surcharges which can become very expensive for the big employers.

Most sites areas are restricted in size. They don't store materials on site, so

materials need to be brought onto site each day. Employers work on margins of one or two per cent and are under economic pressure to run jobs on or ahead of schedule. Even a minor disruption of, say, 20% of the materials going onto a site can have a huge impact in a very short time.

If you can stop a concrete lorry during a concrete pour, for example, you will shut that site down. We've had 300 people on the electricians' demos; we need to get those 300 people to stand at the gates to a site and ask drivers not to cross their picket line. That's the mechanics of it. You'd need an awful lot of police officers to continually deal with a flying picket of 300 workers in an urban area.

The workers who've been attending the London demos work on a variety of sites across south east England, but not usually the big ones we've been targeting. In the run-up to the demonstration at The Shard [an office/hotel building under construction near London Bridge], we leafleted workers there beforehand. A dispute they were having over wages was immediately resolved because their bosses were frightened they'd join our

demonstration. We need to do more of that — engaging with workers on the sites in the run-up to the demonstrations rather than just turning up. We can start to use the demonstrations to apply pressure in disputes about poor conditions that may already be taking place on those sites.

The campaign needs to widen its focus. We need to focus on the main contractors' offices, and their clients' offices, as well as the sites themselves. Why not target Crossrail's office as well as Crossrail building sites? And wherever there is a group of organised workers working on a site run by one of these contractors they should be balloted and supported in putting on picket lines, even if it's just 10 workers.

The tactics I'm talking about are ones that we've employed in the past but have been lost in the conservatism of the British labour movement. But these are the tactics that work.

Fundamentally that's the only question — how can we win? We should adopt the tactics which are necessary to win the fight.

• A longer version of this article is online at tinyurl.com/mickdooley

Tube to ballot against sacking

By a *Tubeworker supporter*

Rail union RMT has announced plans to ballot its train grade members to win the reinstatement of sacked driver James Masango.

A recent employment tribunal found 100% in James's favour, ruling that he had been ordered back to work too soon after an illness. That led to the mistake which cost him his

job. Despite the tribunal's decision, London Underground has still not reinstated James. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said "we now have no option but to launch a public campaign and to begin preparations for a ballot for action of all our train grade members to put right this gross injustice."

Tube drivers will also be balloted for action short of a strike in a separate dispute over safety. The union

has objected to particular aspects of the Operational Effectiveness Programme which it says are unsafe, in part because of the huge cull of station staff jobs undertaken in early 2011. That situation is set to worsen, with bosses planning to displace over 500 station staff to fill vacancies elsewhere on the network.

Rank-and-file activists in the union also begin campaigning this week against

London Underground's four-year pay deal.

Although a recent reps' meeting voted to recommend acceptance of the deal, many activists insist that locking the union into a four-year deal means fighting a clearly cuts-happy management with one hand tied behind our back.

• For more on the campaign against the pay deal, see workersliberty.org/twblog

Strikes "before Xmas" at BBC

The BBC plans to cut 2,000 posts and make significant changes to workers' terms and conditions as part of its "Delivering Quality First" review.

The plan, which was announced on 6 October, is the latest in a long line of attacks from BBC bosses. According to the National Union of Journalists, 7,000 jobs have already been axed at the BBC since 2004.

The latest round of cuts involves a 20% cut over five years, with between 700-800 of the jobs on the chopping block coming from BBC News.

NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet com-

mented: "This is a watershed moment in the BBC's history — the reality is that the BBC will not be the same organisation if these cuts go ahead."

The union also warned of the impact on other media industry workers reliant on the BBC for work.

Technical staff, as well as journalists, will also be hit.

Gerry Morrissey, general secretary of BECTU (which organises technical staff at the BBC), says, "I believe we will see strike action at the BBC before Christmas" unless bosses backed down on the cuts plan.

Strikes escalate at Stow College

By Dale Street

Unison members in Stow College in Glasgow are stepping up their campaign of strike action against the imposition of a pay freeze.

A fortnight ago the union's 90 members — learning support workers,

administration and clerical workers, caretakers, cleaners and catering workers — staged a 24-hour strike.

Around 60 strikers and their supporters turned up for the picket line at the college's city centre campus, while a smaller number of strikers picketed its campus in the West End.

Last week catering staff

staged a three-day strike.

Support for the strike was solid, with picket lines again organised at both campuses. To help raise funds for the dispute strikers organised a "Solidarity Sausage Stand" on one picket line.

This week sees another three days of selective strike action by canteen workers, with a solidarity rally on 12 October (the second day of the strike).

Many of the staff on strike are low paid. Some earn only slightly more than the national minimum wage. With inflation

running at over 5%, the college's "pay freeze" amounts to a pay cut in real terms.

The pay freeze also breaches the commitment given by the college last year that pay rates would be raised to the level of the Scottish Living Wage.

It also breaches the Scottish Government's minimum standard of a £250 pay rise for any public sector employee on less than £21,000 a year.

• For more details see tinyurl.com/stowestr

Barnet council strike, 18 October

Around 300 Barnet Unison members will stage a second one-day strike on Tuesday 18 October against the privatisation of their jobs. Please email messages of support to contactus@barnetunison.org.uk

New on workersliberty.org

• Tube: vote to REJECT pay deal — tinyurl.com/tubereject

• Debating tactics in Southampton strike — tinyurl.com/sotondebate

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Occupy Cincinnati

US "occupy" movement spreads

American socialist Dan La Botz explains the mood behind the sit-in protests on Wall Street, New York, which are now spreading across the US, including his home city, Cincinnati.

Cincinnati is a microcosm of the country.

Thousands of Cincinnatians face high unemployment, live in poverty, or lack of health insurance, while a handful of multimillionaires live in luxury on the salaries paid by the national and multinational corporations headquartered here.

Like the rest of America, we in the 99% watch our community's economic situation deteriorate while the 1% at the top increase their salaries, take home more stock option, and prepare their golden parachutes. Just as on the national level, the very wealthy, the CEOs of banks and corporations, dominate the Republican and Democratic parties, setting the political agenda in Cincinnati, Hamilton County, and Ohio. Here in Cincinnati, capitalism doesn't work any better than it does at the national level.

Multi-billion dollar corporations—Procter & Gamble, Kroger, Macy's, Western & Southern Financial Group, American Financial Group, Chiquita, and Fifth Third Bank—dominate the city. The chief executive officers earn salaries of several million a year, plus stock options and other remuneration. Robert McDonald, CEO of P&G takes home a salary of \$13.1 million—this is 82 times

greater than the average national CEO salary of \$161,000. Macy's CEO Terry Lundgren gets \$11.8 million. That is 337 times a department store manager's average pay of \$34,000 a year. The average Cincinnati CEO receives a net salary of \$4 million.

The corporations that pay such enormous salaries also exercise enormous power and influence. They hire and fire the executives, middle managers and workers, determine their salaries, benefits and conditions. The corporations' executives staff the boards of most of the major cultural and social institutions of the region. Their lawyers and lobbyists propose legislation to benefit their industries and companies.

Locally the major corporations join together to form the Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC) and the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) to promote their agenda of corporate rule and gentrification at the expense of local communities. Their corporate PACs and some of their stockholders contribute to the political campaigns for local, state and national office, to keep both major parties working for them. All of the reins of local power can be traced back to a hand full of people who live in Indian Hill or perhaps Hyde Park.

The official unemployment in Cincinnati stands at 8.5%, but most authorities believe the official rate underestimates discouraged workers. African American and Latino unemployment is generally

estimated at twice that of whites, that is 16 or 17 percent. For youth the unemployment rate is 40 or 50 percent. And many of us have part-time jobs, rather than the full-time job we need. We have in our city tens of thousands of people who cannot find work, many of whom have exhausted or are close to exhausting their unemployment payments.

Cincinnati has, according to the last count, almost a quarter of a million Cincinnati residents are without health insurance.

Today almost no one in our area can feel secure in their job. Meanwhile, the Republicans at the state level and the Democrats in the city, cater to the needs of the corporations while they ignore the needs of the citizens. Disgracefully rather than creating jobs, they attack the unions that offer some protection to working people.

OCCUPY CINCINNATI
We need a new distribution of wealth in this country. We need to provide jobs for all. Good jobs at living wages. We need education and health care for all, and those should be free.

And it can be done too. We need to start by ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, by bringing all the troops home, and closing the hundreds of U.S. military bases around the world that do nothing to defend us and do a lot of harm to others. Most important: we have to change the system.

The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City adopted on Septem-

ber 30 indicts Wall Street as responsible for the joblessness, homelessness, environmental destruction, and many others. The Declaration describes the damage done by the capitalist system: unemployment, foreclosure, and others. It says:

"Our politics are the politics of people who recognize that something has to change. Our movement is made up of young people without jobs and who can't afford school. Of working men and women who've lost their jobs. Of families who've lost their homes. Of African Americans and Latinos who never fully shared in opportunity. We are working together to build the power to create a new democratic system and bring justice to our society."

How amazing and exciting that we will march here in Cincinnati, joining the protesters in New York, learning from the Egyptians in Tahrir Square, the indignados in the plazas of Spain, and the workers of Wisconsin. We're part of a new, international movement for democracy and social justice around the world.

We're part of a movement that can change history, that change the direction of the world's headed. A movement that can save the planet and its people.

• Dan La Botz is a Cincinnati-based teacher, writer and activist. He is on the editorial board of the socialist journal *New Politics*. Full text: newpol.org/node/526

Greek workers fight the Troika

By Theodora Polenta

A wave of strikes, occupations, and demonstrations is erupting all across Greece.

Transport workers and air traffic controllers brought all traffic to a standstill on Friday 7 October. Bin workers continue their strike, and the whole of Athens is suffocated by uncollected rubbish. Utility workers are occupying their central offices and considering further action,

Teachers and council workers are to demonstrate on 11 October. Greek petrol workers are to start a continuous general strike from 11 October. Archaeologists and tax collectors have called 48-hour strikes.

Students are still occupying universities and schools. A movement of civil disobedience is building up, refusing to comply with any new taxes imposed by the Troika (European Union, European Central Bank, and IMF) and the government.

All these different streams of resistance are to meet and unify their voices against the measures of the government and the Troika in a 19 October general strike called by the big union federations, GSEE and ADEDY.

The popularity of the ruling party, Pasok, has plummeted to 17% in the latest polls. New Democracy, the Greek conservative party, leads Pasok, but at only 22%. Those two parties got 78% of the vote between them in 2009, but now 60% refuse to back either of the two big parties.

The minor parliamentary parties have not gained much in the polls. The ultra-right populist party

Laos is at about 6%, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) at seven or eight percent, and Syriza (a loose coalition around the old Eurocommunist party) at 5%. Over 30% back parties not represented in parliament, or refuse to choose.

The ruling class does not have a secure solution in terms of political representation. The formation of an emergency coalition government of national unity is up for discussion, but in polls over 50% oppose the idea.

New Democracy is calling for new elections, and promising renegotiation of the austerity measures with the Troika, but on the basis of speeding up the privatisation of the public sector and utilities. In polls, over 60% oppose new elections.

KKE is also calling for new elections, hoping to capitalise electorally. Syriza proposes a coalition of centre left forces with ecologists and sections of Pasok that oppose the Troika and the austerity measures.

The situation shows the necessity of an anti-capitalist manifesto and a revolutionary left with, as its strategic goal and aim, the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

We need an aggressive workers' front to push forward a programme of transitional demands — abolish the debt; not a penny for the creditors; nationalisation under workers' control of the banks, the public sector, the utility companies, and big business with no compensation; workers' control of prices; wage increases; work for all — and open the road to socialism.

Reinstate Edd Bauer!

A Birmingham student reports on the campaign to win reinstatement for Edd Bauer, the Guild [student union] officer suspended for his role in a peaceful direct action at Lib Dem conference.

"It's totally surreal building for a demonstration against our student union.

"I want to spend my time campaigning against the government and the city traders, not the people who are meant to be fighting for me. However, the undemocratic suspension means we have no choice.

"If we were to put Edd's suspension to democratic vote at a Guild general meeting or council it is clear that he'd be immediately reinstated.

"However, the Guild is seeking to deal with the sensitive political issue under the powers of the conservative president

and the trustee board, which has a majority of non-students.

"As we build our campaign to defend education it is important we sort out our student union, getting control back into the hands of students and out of the majority non-student trustee board. We are building a demonstration on Wednesday 12 October at 1pm at the Guild of students demanding a vote on Edd's suspension.

"Encouragingly the suspension has only further outraged students on campus who are now putting even more pressure on the Guild to campaign.

"Under this pressure the Guild has agreed to put on as many coaches to 9 November as we can fill. Last year the demand for spaces on coaches for the national demo was so much that we ended up at capacity at 500 students.

"This year we aim to beat that figure."