

For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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Union ranks should decide democratically: see page 5



**After 10 July's giant strike
Plan the fightback**

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, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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Defend South Yorkshire Freedom Riders!

By Jenny Elder

A police crackdown on a long-running peaceful protest in South Yorkshire led to the arrest of two protesters on Monday 23 June. The "Freedom Riders", Tony Nuttall, 65, and George Arthur, 64, have since been charged with fare evasion and obstructing a police officer.

The Freedom Ride protests started in April following the decision by South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTX) to make cuts to concessionary travel to make up a £234,000 budget shortfall. Free train travel for pensioners and disabled people was axed completely, with bus concessionary fares pushed back to 9.30am on weekdays.

South Yorkshire's elderly

and disabled people decided to fight back, organising weekly mass protests in which a group of activists travel on a train together without tickets.

In mid-May the protests, which had begun to attract around 150 activists, achieved a partial success with the restoration of free all-day bus and train travel for disabled people and half-price train travel for pensioners.

Consistent in their demands, the Freedom Riders refused to end their campaign and the protests continued, attracting significant police attention in recent weeks. Initially attempting to prevent the campaigners boarding the train by blocking access to platforms at Barnsley (resulting in a lively static protest nearby), police have gradually stepped up their operation in an attempt to put a stop

to the campaign.

The 23 June protest had started as normal, with Barnsley and Sheffield protesters joining together for their weekly ride to Meadowhall. Waiting for them on the platform at Meadowhall, however, was a large group of police officers, so the group decided to stay on the train and return to Sheffield, joined by the police, who boarded the train. Upon arriving at Sheffield, the train doors were locked and only the police allowed to exit, who promptly formed a cordon around the train. The protesters were then released from the train into a sort of loose "kettle", being kept on the platform. Several pieces of footage taken by protesters and shared on social media show police shoving elderly activists and violently arresting Tony Nuttall. A reporter from the *Sheffield Star* was ordered by

police to delete film taken on his phone as it was taken on private property without permission, then threatened with arrest under anti-terrorism legislation. According to those attending, two people were taken to hospital, including a blind protester who was pushed over another protester in a wheelchair. The latest video, shared on the Facebook page of the local Unite Community branch, of which both arrested protesters are members, shows George Arthur politely engaging with a rail worker, immediately prior to his own forceful arrest.

Undeterred, the Freedom Ride campaign is planning further action — a demonstration has been organised for 9.15am on 7 July outside Sheffield Magistrates Court, to coincide with Tony and George's appearance.

Victory for Lifeworks!

By Rachael Barnes

Service users protesting the closure of a mental health drop in centre have had a victory, after four months in occupation.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust had previously tried to close the Lifeworks centre in favour of a county-wide service, which would force all patients back to their GP and through a se-

ries of assessments without any support available.

Management have agreed to keep the Lifeworks centre open for five years, with hospital transport for those that require it and the open clinic being open two days a week.

The chairman of the county council's health committee, Cllr Kilian Bourke, hopes that "the campaign has helped to raise the profile of mental health provision locally."



Progress for anti-fascism in the north east

By Luke Neal

An English Defence League "national demonstration" of around 200 marched through Middlesbrough on Saturday 28 June.

A counter-demonstration of 250 assembled before their march, took a route through the centre of town and heard speeches from trade unionists, black community activists and local antifascists.

The response was organised by Teesside Solidarity Movement through a series of democratic and open coordinations. This marks further breaks from the Unite Against Fascism model of doing antifascist activity in the North East.

In Newcastle, antifascist marches are held under the banner of "Newcastle Unites", who operate -

through a secret committee of Labour councillors and the Socialist Workers Party. In May 2013, 14 antifascists were arrested before a Newcastle Unites demo. The evidence points towards collusion between the march organisers and the police.

In Teesside, however, the situation is healthier. An increasing caucus of those involved recognise that there is more to effective antifascism than simply outnumbering our opponents and claiming it as a victory.

We need to build the confidence to confront and prevent the EDL from doing what they want. While we were unable to do this in Middlesbrough, the way it was organised at least offers the opportunity for alternative tactics and politics to be discussed and adopted.



Over 500 parents, children and Sure Start workers attended a Save Sure Start picnic and lobby in Newcastle on Wednesday 3 July.

Hundreds of signatures were collected, and parents argued with councillors about the planned 65% cut in the service.

The protest was coordinated by Unison activists. Councillors have yet to outline the detail of their proposals, which centres and jobs they will cut.

● <http://unison-newcastle.org.uk/sure-start.html>

Modi: an Indian Thatcher

By Michéal MacEoin

The election of Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the biggest political shift in Indian politics since 1947 and spells danger for Indian workers, women and ethnic and religious minorities.

It is the first time a party has won more votes than the Nehru-Gandhi Congress Party. On a high turnout of 66%, the BJP got 31% to the Congress Party's 19%, picking up 282 of the 543 seats in the lower house. This gives them a parliamentary majority, and an even bigger one if they can count on the support of the rest of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance of centre-right and right-wing parties.

After a well-organised election campaign on which the BJP are rumoured to have spend over £1 billion, Modi's party defeated many regional parties and crushed the Congress, who only have 44 seats — leaving no real opposition in the Lok Sabha (House of the People — India's lower house).

The background was that of a sinking annual growth rate of under 5%, a fall from 9.3 percent in the last quarter of 2010-2011. India has slipped from the world's second-fastest-growing economy to tenth place in this index. Public borrowing has quadrupled in the past five years, the national deficit grew substantially, inflation is high and the value of the rupee has

plummeted by 20 percent. Between 2004 and 2013, the wholesale price index for food went up by 157 percent, vegetables by 350 percent and onions by 521 percent, amid accusations of both corruption and mismanagement.

As well as his base in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu nationalist militia and movement, Modi picked up votes from young and urban voters disaffected by the Congress Party, state corruption, lack of growth and jobs. In rural areas such as Uttar Pradesh, villagers preferred promises of development rather than the almost feudal charity of local Congress big-wigs.

Modi played on his background as a low-caste tea seller, styling himself as an aspirational and strong leader. The election campaign was Modi-centric; this was reflected in the grandiose and star-studded inauguration ceremony during which Modi demonstrably took the oath of office in Hindi.

Modi's home state of Gujarat was the site of anti-Muslim pogroms in 2002, following the deaths of Hindu pilgrims when their coach caught fire. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India accused Modi of not intervening when he had the full power to do so. Even worse, he fomented the violence, declaring without evidence that the Pakistani security services were involved, and paraded the charred bodies through the streets of Ahmedabad.



The pogroms included horrific violence, rapes, and attacks on pregnant women. In their wake, Modi was denied visas by UK and US. Now, in light of growing bilateral trade and investment between the UK and India, the Cameron government has bent over backwards to accommodate Modi.

The BJP promised "Good times ahead" in the election and played on the other side of Modi's record in Gujarat, where he built himself back up from the pogroms with a flashy bid for international investment, wooing capitalists with big trade fairs and lax regulation. He struck deals with tycoons, including giving away a large stretch of coastline for port development.

However, in Gujarat there was little progress on education, malnutrition or health care. Critics also cite environmental damage, dis-

placement of the rural poor and a high rate of farmer suicides.

"If you define Thatcherism as less government, free enterprise, then there is no difference between Modi-nomics and Thatcherism," says Deepak Kanth, a London-based banker and BJP fundraiser.

COMMUNALISM
As a long-time member of RSS Modi didn't need to appeal to communalism too blatantly during the election campaign because his base there was secured.

Now Modi has been pushing an Indian nationalist and Hindu chauvinist agenda, with his home ministry instructing civil servants in Delhi to use Hindi rather than English in all their communications on social media. The language will also be prioritised on all government websites. This policy has already sparked protestations from Tamil-language states such as Tamil Nadu in the south of the country, and from politicians in its only Muslim-majority state, Indian-administered Kashmir.

The BJP is part of the Sangh Parivar (the Family of Organisations) Hindu nationalist movement established as an umbrella group by RSS members. The RSS wants to see a "Hindu renaissance", and view society as an organic unity, favouring strong state. It was set up in 1925, and much like the Phalange in Lebanon, it imitated 1930s fascist organisations in Europe.

One means by which an organic unity of the nation can be forged in India is

through a negative cohesion based on scapegoating the Muslim minority. According to the *New Statesman* "One of Modi's closest associates, Amit Shah, called on voters in Uttar Pradesh to reject parties that put up Muslim candidates. He also openly urged voters to use the ballot box to seek 'revenge for the insult meted out to our community. This election will be a reply to those who have been ill-treating our mothers and sisters'. This in an area where dozens were killed in Hindu-Muslim riots last year.

"This led to an almost unprecedented formal ban by the Electoral Commission of India on 11 April, stopping Shah from making any further public appearances in this campaign in Uttar Pradesh. He had previously been banned from entering his native Gujarat, where he stands accused of murder, using the local police as his proxies. Amid loud protests, the Uttar Pradesh ban was lifted on 18 April."

Amid the rise of this Hindu cultural nationalism (Hindutva), the "left" has been routed. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), which governed West Bengal for 34 years until 2011 as part of the Left Front, was reduced to just two seats out of a total of 42 in the state. This is no surprise given that the CPI(M) tried to expropriate 10,000 acres of land in Nandigram in 2007 to give to Indonesia industrialists, leading to fatal clashes in which 14 villagers died and many more were injured.

Nationally, the CPI(M) won nine seats. It is the party's worst performance in decades, and comes just ten years after its high-point in 2004 when the CPI(M) won 5.66% of the vote and 43 MPs — before backing the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, though refusing to join it. The smaller Communist Party of India has just one seat in the Lok Sabha.

Indian workers and the left need to chart a course defending secularism against communalism, resisting Modi's impending attacks on workers and welfare provision, and standing up for women's rights.

Israel-Palestine: peace via two states!

By Gerry Bates
As war rages in Iraq and Syria, the threat of a return to open war in Israel-Palestine is also increasing.

Three teenage Israeli settlers disappeared in the West Bank on 12 June, and on 30 June were found murdered.

The Israeli government's typical hyper-response has included raiding thousands of homes in the West Bank, arresting 570 Palestinians and killing several (5 by one report, 10 by another) in the process. 34 bombing raids on Gaza on 1 July injured 11 people. Israeli government ministers have threatened more of the same.

On 2 July a Palestinian teenager was murdered in East Jerusalem. Before the murder hundreds of Israeli chauvinists had marched chanting "Death to the Arabs".

The only alternative, both to the grave risk of escalation now, and to the everyday "quiet" oppression of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, is "two states" — i.e. to force the Israeli government to concede to the Palestinians the right to have their own independent state, alongside Israel.

In principle military action by the Palestinians to try to drive the Israeli army out of the occupied territories is justified; but in practice now the military disproportion means that the Palestinians will lose from military escalation.

Also, those Palestinian factions who opt for military action now often target Israeli civilians, in an Islamist or ultra-nationalist logic of demanding that Israel be wiped out.

To offer a way out, labour movements around the world should redouble their efforts to support Palestinian rights and build links both with Palestinians and with Israeli internationalists.

FGM still increasing

By Rhodri Evans

On 3 July a parliamentary committee reported that "Female genital mutilation is an ongoing national scandal which is likely to have resulted in the preventable mutilation of thousands of girls to whom the state owed a duty of care".

There has long been law against doctors and parents who are party to mutilation of young girls' genitals. But the committee still found a "growing prevalence of FGM". Its recommendations include:

- Failure to report female genital mutilation should be made a criminal offence if reporting of the practice does not increase in the next 12 months
- Headteachers and child protection offi-

cers to have compulsory safeguarding training

- Better services to support victims.

Efua Dorkenoo of the End FGM campaign said: "I would have liked for them to make the failure of professionals to report FGM a crime" straight off.

The MPs were doubtful about recommending regular medical checks on FGM.

A doctors' and nurses' report in 2013 found that "the strong taboo associated with the practice and the cultural sensitivities involved in speaking out against it" had led to FGM continuing, with "23,000 girls under the age of 15 at risk" and the number increasing.

On this issue, girls' rights should override hesitations based on "cultural relativism".

“Human liberation is too important to leave to chance”

How I became a socialist
By Kate Harris



When I was growing up, I remember being really confused about why some people had loads and other people didn't. It seemed really unfair that I was well fed, clothed and schooled while other children didn't go to school, or had to work, or went to bed hungry.

I grew up in a really middle class environment, and a lot of what some people said made me angry. When I was about eight, I said that people should be made to give up their wealth. Some adults would just scoff, or laugh at me, or say I would change my mind as I got older. I may only be twenty-five — but I haven't yet changed my mind about believing that people who have loads should pay up.

As a child, my views weren't all progressive. I was led to believe that I was cleverer than other people and that, because my grandparents had done so, it was possible for all working-class people in Britain to become middle class if they wanted to. This led to some deeply awkward conversations with poorer people at my church. I knew that what I'd said in these conversations was wrong, but I didn't know how to reconcile what I'd been told with the reality of people's lives.

As a teenager, I expressed my feelings of dissatisfaction at inequality in the world by raising money for aid and development charities. When I was 18 I went off to work for Christian Aid for a year (I was semi-religious until I went to university).

While I was working for Christian Aid I lived with an Anglican theologian called Helen. She's a massive feminist and a socialist, a very posh and wonderful woman to whom I still feel indebted for looking after me and making me a better person. She and our next door neighbour Natalie helped me to start embracing being queer, a feminist and left-wing. We spent hours in the evenings smoking cigars, eating elaborate meals and talking down bigots.

When I got to university, I immersed myself in the LGBT society. I was more and more confident in being bisexual despite my evangelical Christian background. I was studying Sociology and Politics at a posh university. In my first year

tutorials, rich young men openly laughed at me for being a feminist and a socialist. I was vaguely involved in the Labour Club, the Trades Unions Society and quite heavily involved in the Feminist Society. Through the Feminist Society, I met anarchist-feminists and socialist-feminists.

I didn't seriously consider revolutionary politics until my third year. Like many other people around my age, a lot changed for me as a result of the student protests in 2010. The anti-fees movement felt like it had real momentum, and we came close to winning. Although there were and are many faults with the student movement, it showed me how people can work together to do “what is necessary”. It showed me the power of collective organisation, and that we could run stuff ourselves, without bosses!

I have an instinctively anti-authoritarian politics and was around a lot of anarchist communists. Although I have a lot of respect for proper anarchist communists, I never quite became one as I didn't and don't understand their “plan” for achieving a communist society.

MARXISM

By this time my politics were much clearer and harder. I'd seen my comrades getting beaten up by cops and had seen the way police exist to protect the state and ruling class interests.

I'd had fights with the university management. I'd had crap jobs and understood the role of the bosses and had some idea of the importance of the wage relation. I knew that rich women had nothing in common with me and that their interests differed fundamentally from mine. I'd read the *Communist Manifesto* and thought I was a Marxist. But there was a lot still to work out.

In my fourth year I came across the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts and started going to their events. This is how I came across Workers' Liberty. I hated being an undergraduate for various reasons, and my mind was ravaged by depression. I was scared of reading things and of disagreeing with the small circle of lefties at Edinburgh University. But I found that as I became more educated, my politics became sharper and clearer.

The first person who'd ever asked me what I thought, and waited for an answer, was a Workers' Liberty organiser. He didn't second-guess what I thought, or presume what I

thought, he just asked me for a straightforward answer. I had never come across anything like that before. He also challenged me, in a comradely way, when I said things that were lazy, wrong or poorly thought-through. The way he and a few others in NCAFC approached politics impressed me a lot. I was looking for real ways to change the world, and so were they.

Through discussion and reading, I started to become convinced of the politics and the importance of the programme of Workers' Liberty, but I definitely joined too early. I don't think that when I first joined I had a clear idea of the purpose of my being in the group or what it would achieve. I thought, “I broadly agree with this group of people so I should join”. I drifted away and left because I found the heated internal discussions about religion and race very disorienting, and no longer knew what to think about the group. It didn't help that I was working very long hours and was extremely exhausted. If I'd had a better understanding of my reason for being in the group, I wouldn't have left.

I very recently re-joined the AWL after a series of discussions, and after having done a lot reading and thinking. I came back because I think the AWL advocates an essential set of politics: containing the kind of ideas that would make a workers' revolution successful and sustained. This tradition needs to continue and people need to take these ideas on. I want to be trained to be a more effective revolutionary, and we need others to do the same.

A workers' revolution in Britain is a distant prospect — but we have to take advantage of flashpoints of struggle and exploit the bosses' weaknesses wherever we can. As far as I'm concerned, there's a huge amount of work to be done in order to prepare ourselves for class war.

If you're reading this article and thinking about how it might apply to you, or that you agree with some of what the AWL says, I urge you to come to our events, to begin discussions with a comrade and to start reading and to educate yourself more about Marxism.

Human liberation from exploitation and oppression rests upon the abolition of capitalism and class divisions, and building a socialist society in its place. It is too important for us to leave to chance. The work starts here and now.

“The bosses went too far — they always do”

Press

By Elizabeth Butterworth



The phone hacking trial, which concluded just over a week ago, was the longest trial in recent legal history.

There were seven months of hearings, 42,000 pages of evidence from the CPS, twelve defendants and crimes investigated over a ten year period. It exposed corruption and criminality at the heart of the bourgeois press. The estimated amount spent by the defence on out-of-court settlements and legal fees of former employees of News International varies — but some have put it as high as £1 billion. Rupert Murdoch funded the defences of former editor of the *Sun*, Rebekah Brooks (who was acquitted due to a lack of clear evidence) and former editor of the *News of the World*, Andy Coulson.

Andy Coulson, who was employed as the Prime Minister's Director of Communications before resigning in January 2011, was convicted along with others as being guilty of conspiracy to hack phones. He is also to face re-trial for buying royal telephone directories from police officers and may be made to pay back £750,000 of legal costs. £1.7 million was spent on the police investigation and more than £750,000 of public money on the case itself.

The *News of the World* was closed down by Murdoch in Summer 2011, after 168 years of press. The UK section of News Corporation has changed its name to 'News UK'. Other than that, little seems to have changed, little fuss seems to have been made, and it is fair to say that this trial ended with

a whimper rather than a bang.

The ruling class appears to be getting away with it. David Cameron apologised for hiring Andy Coulson, saying it was 'the wrong decision', but he does not appear to be particularly embattled or embarrassed by the scandal — despite being warned and despite solid knowledge that phone hacking had gone on at the *News of the World* from as early as 2007.

This is why Marxists use terms like “the bourgeois press”. It is in the interests of the ruling class to not make this into too much of a “big deal”. Some publications have raised questions, including the *Guardian*, who ran a story asking why the Prime Minister was getting away with it, and *Businessweek*, who described Rupert Murdoch as an “escape artist”. But, considering the implications of the trial, little has really been said.

The brazenness of Murdoch and his “inner circle” is striking. At the start of the trial, one of Rebekah Brooks's defence lawyers attempted to get the case against Brooks thrown due to prejudicial news coverage. The prosecution pointed out the case of Abu Hamza, who tried the same thing in 2006 due to news coverage in the *Sun*, which was then edited by Brooks, but faced trial anyway. Claims have also been made that Brooks could phone Downing Street to get a visa sorted out at short notice.

I am reminded of a quote from the American Trotskyist James Cannon — “The bosses went too far — they always do”. Coulson and others acted as if they were above the law. David Cameron employed him anyway. Yet here Cameron is — getting away with it.



Plan the fightback

The public-sector strike on 10 July will be the biggest strike in Britain since the November 2011 strike over attacks to public-sector pensions. Well over one million workers could take part.

At the heart of the dispute is the low-pay epidemic which afflicts millions of workers in Britain. According to research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the cost of maintaining a decent standard of living in the UK has increased by 46% since 2008, while wages have only increased by 9%. A couple with children now need to earn £40,574 to maintain a minimum standard of living, compared to less than £28,000 in 2008.

According to TUC figures, around five million workers in Britain are paid less than a living wage, around 20% of the workforce. In some poorer areas of London, nearly 50% of workers are paid less than the amount even Tory mayor Boris Johnson's office says is required to maintain a minimum standard of living. The 10 July strike can be the start of an ongoing working-class counter-offensive that challenges the capitalist logic that workers must continue to pay for the financial crisis by having our wages squeezed below inflation.

Workers in seven different unions will strike on 10 July. Unison, the country's biggest public-sector union, balloted around 500,000 members.

Britain's single-biggest union, Unite, balloted 70,000 of its public-sector members for the strike, returning a 68% majority in favour of striking, and a 79% majority in favour of taking industrial action short of a strike.

The GMB union's ballot returned a three-to-one majority on a 23% turnout.

A consultative ballot of Public and Commercial Service union (PCS) members on joining the strike returned a 74% majority on a 24% turnout. The PCS, along with the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), already has a live ballot mandate from an ongoing dispute which allows it to participate in the strike without formally re-balloting its membership.

Unite, GMB, and Unison balloted members employed by local councils and by local authority-controlled schools. The unions oppose local government employers' offer of a 1% pay increase, and are demanding instead an across-the-board increase of £1 per hour, or an increase to the "Living Wage", £7.65 (or £8.80 in London) — whichever is higher.

The demand is moderate, but it is at least a concrete demand that gives the dispute a defined aim. This is an advance on previous national disputes that have been reactive and posed no positive demands of their own.

Some workers in workplaces striking on 10 July, and equally affected by low pay, were not balloted: for example, Unite only balloted its members in local-authority schools and in large academy chains that peg their employees' terms

and conditions to nationally-negotiated agreements. Unions could have made the strike more solid in schools by balloting workers in other Academies and Free Schools for the demand that their employer signs up to the national agreement.

The PCS, NUT, and FBU's pre-existing, ongoing disputes are about a range of issues. The PCS says it will strike to "break the pay freeze, and win a fair settlement on pay, jobs, pensions, outsourcing, and terms and conditions such as performance management." The NUT's dispute is over pay, pensions, and workload, although performance-related pay system the dispute aimed to block has already been introduced. Fire fighters have struck repeatedly in a dispute that aims to reverse an increase in their pension age to 60, and only allows them to retire at 55 if they are deemed "unfit", thus losing access to up to 47% of their pension fund.

Workers involved in smaller, local disputes will also join the 10 July strike, such as RMT, TSSA, and Unite members employed by Transport for London, who have already struck several times as part of a dispute to stop the introduction of a performance-related pay scheme that would reduce their pension entitlement.

LAUNCHPAD

Workers' Liberty members active in the unions striking on 10 July are arguing for the strike to be a launchpad for more action, not an end in itself.

To win living wages, unions will need to announce ongoing calendars of action that mobilise members on a basis that maximises participation and maintains continuous pressure on employers, rather than marching them up the hill for incidental strike days followed by months of silence while union officials take part in behind-closed-doors negotiations. This is the pattern that fatally undermined the 2011 pensions dispute. We cannot afford to repeat it.

The low turnout in most ballot results, particularly in Unison where just 14% of members voted, suggests widespread and understandable discouragement after years of wage freezes, squeezes, and austerity cuts.

Although union leaders talk about the need for more action in the autumn, workers are understandably far from enthused or empowered by the current "strategy", which consists of a set-piece strike on 10 July with, as yet, no concrete action to follow until the TUC demonstration on Saturday 18 October.

Unison's leaders have already talked about further strikes on 9 and 10 September. Definite dates in September should be agreed between the unions; and other actions should be planned between now and then to maintain levels of mobilisation and keep pressure on the employers.

Urgent steps should be taken to bring NHS workers, who are being denied even the meagre 1% pay increase recom-



mended by the NHS Pay Review Body, into the dispute. Unison's 2014 Health sector conference voted to ballot for strikes over pay: that vote should be acted on. Unite, GMB, and smaller NHS unions should ballot their memberships in the health sector too.

Local joint union committees, in some places already mobilising to build for 10 July, should continue meeting after 10 July, and the Executives of all the unions involved in the strike should hold joint meeting to discuss further action.

Meetings should be organised for the strike day itself. In 2011 activists in some cities successfully held strike day members' meetings prior or after rallies. At these meetings members can discuss the dispute, and vote to express their views on what should be done next. Marches and rallies on strike days are important, but they must be accompanied by real meetings with real discussion, that make decisions.

Working-class confidence needs to be rebuilt, from the workplace up. That means regular workplace meetings, forming cross-union committees in each sector and locality, and developing ongoing strategies over which workers feel a sense of ownership. The strongest possible strike on 10 July can be the start of that rebuilding.

Real wage squeeze

Real wages — the value of wages after inflation has been taken into account — have fallen sharply since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008.

They have dropped every quarter since the beginning of 2010, at an average of 2.2% a year, and have fallen for fourteen consecutive quarters.

Exactly how much you can say real wages have declined depends on the measures used to calculate, particularly, of inflation. The government's preferred measure is the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which excludes housing costs. Historically the Retail Price Index has been used, and as that includes housing costs it is a more realistic measure of people's living standards.

Using RPI figures, we can say that there has been the longest sustained fall in real wages since these figures started to be calculated. The only comparable drop in wage rates was at the time of the 1976 IMF crisis when real wages dropped nearly as much in a shorter period of five quarters. However real wages were rising at around 3% a year in the period around this drop. They were rising less strongly in the twenty years before the 2008 crash — 1.5% a year in the 1990s, falling to 1.2% a year in the 2000s.

On average, real wages are now at the same level as they were in 2003, an 8% fall. This fall is worse for young work-

ers. According to figures from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 18 to 24 year olds saw the biggest decline in pay — of 14% between 2008 and 2013, pushing their levels of pay back to those of 1998. The fall for the 25 to 29-year-old age group was also substantial. Real pay fell by 12%, taking wage levels back to that of 1999.

If real wages are calculated using CPI the picture is in some ways worse. This measure shows a decline in each of the twenty-three quarters from the third quarter of 2008 to the first quarter of 2014 (the most recent) apart from two.

Decrease have affected both private and public sector workers, although it has hit private sector workers somewhat more because many are working reduced hours. If and when a recovery comes, it is likely to leave public sector wages lower in comparison to the private sector. But the government's Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that the earliest wage levels will return to their 2008 level will be 2018.

Meanwhile, according to the High Pay Centre, the average Chief Executive of a FTSE 100 company saw their pay increase by 5% from 2012 to 2013. Their pay is around 160 times that of the average worker, up from about fifty times average pay in 1998.

Union ranks must decide!

David Cameron has already promised that new anti-union laws will be in the Tories' 2015 manifesto.

Specifically, a 50% minimum threshold for ballots (probably a 50% minimum turnout, but the Tories might go for requiring 50% of eligible voters for a valid majority). They want to introduce a new law that will require unions to re-ballot for every individual strike, rather than using a single ballot as a mandate for calling several strikes in an ongoing dispute.

The Tories want to further smash up the unions' ability to organised timely and effective industrial action. That will take power away from union members, outlaw most strike action (something that should be a fundamental right) and into the hands of the state.

The labour movement needs to prepare a counter-offensive against such new anti-union laws and for a return to workplace ballots and a positive charter of workers' and union rights.

Collapse and resistance: the workers' movement facing World War One

In the twenty or thirty years before World War One, mass socialist and trade-union movements were built across Europe, starting off very small in the 1880s and acquiring such strength by, say, 1905 that most of their activists believed that they would soon be able to overthrow capitalism.

That inspiring advance came to a sudden end in early August 1914. With the start of World War One, most of the big socialist and trade-union movements rallied behind their own bourgeois governments. A permanent line of division was drawn in the labour movement, and remains to this day, between the revolutionary socialists and internationalists on one side, and the time-servers, petty reformers, opportunists, and bureaucrats on the other.

Best-known is the collapse of the German Social Democratic Party. Also dramatic was the political collapse of the labour movement in France.

There, the strongest and most militant part of the labour movement was not so much the Socialist Party as the trade-union confederation, the CGT. It was an unusual sort of trade-union confederation, in many ways more like a "trade-unionist" revolutionary political party than a union focused on day-to-day details of wages and conditions.

Its leaders were "revolutionary syndicalists", meaning that they aimed for a socialist revolution made without politics, through the means of a general strike which would paralyse the state and enable the union organisation in each workplace and industry to seize and exercise social control of the productive wealth of society.

They officially advised their members not to vote in elections, though in fact most members voted for the Socialist Party (and some of the CGT leaders were also "privately" SP members).

More: the CGT's most vigorous activity, outside struggles on wages and conditions and preparation for the revolutionary general strike, was against militarism. Many of them supported the idea that the war which everyone in Europe saw as threatening could be prevented by a trade-union commitment to call a general strike against any declaration of war.



The weekly *La Guerre Sociale* was influential in the CGT before 1914 as a demagogically ultra-militant anti-war paper — but in 1914 switched to vehement nationalism.

The CGT collapsed as ignominiously as the German Social Democracy — indeed, more so, because its loyal internationalist minority was smaller. How did that happen?

Alfred Rosmer was an activist in the CGT, and one of the leaders of the internationalist opposition in World War 1. Later he joined the Communist Party, then allied with the Left Opposition. After a brief period in the French Trotskyist movement, he dropped out of active politics in the 1930s, but remained friendly with Trotsky (the founding congress of the Fourth International was held in Rosmer's house) and wrote valuable books.

His most important book was *The Workers' Movement during the First World War*, published in 1936 (volume 1) and 1953 (volume 2). The translated extracts below from volume 1 tell the story of how the CGT collapsed.

[As war approached] the CGT had renounced nothing. At the Havre Congress [in 1912] it resoundingly reaffirmed the positions of Amiens [from 1906]. In the middle of 1913 it refused to declare a schedule for a general strike, but only because it knew that it could not do that.

Despite the exhortations of the anarchists, it wanted to remain in control of its own activities. If the anarchists responded with bitterness and anger, that proves only that they were noticing, a bit late, that revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism are two different things.

However, it was incontestable that something had changed. What? The malaise and unease were undeniable. The CGT no longer had the élan and self-confidence which characterised it in 1906-8 when it was at the height of its strength and influence. It could only mark time. It stalled and declined. Why? Because the formula on which it had constituted itself and on which it had subsisted was worn out. Because the men who had resoundingly applied that formula were worn out, too.

[CGT leader] Emile Pouget had defined the formula as follows:

"The aim proposed by the Confederation's declaration of principles is thus identified with the idea put forward by all schools of social philosophy; only, it proposes it in a form freed of all the useless doctrinal extras and all the particular views of the sects, keeping only the essence".

It was a convenient formula which allowed for a regroupment of revolutionary forces by rallying along the same lines men who came from different points in the revolutionary spectrum but all wanted to free the workers' movement from the incessant and stultifying quarrels of the anarchist and socialist sects which weakened it and to purge it of the opportunism which had got a grip on parliamentary socialism. It was convenient, but it could not last long...

The CGT's weakness consisted in the fact that it was a hybrid, simultaneously a trade-union organisation and a political party, and more a party than a trade-union organisation... It retained, however, enough features of corporatist organisation to weigh down, at given times, on the activity of the CGT. The officials of the rank and file organisations could not but be preoccupied with trade-union membership numbers. Between the party work and the properly trade-union work that the CGT had to do, there was often an antagonism.

And the CGT faced two equally formidable internal enemies: the reformists and the ultra-lefts.

The reformists, basing themselves on the (at least theoretically) federalist structure of the CGT, only recognised the confederation's decisions as much as suited them. And more: in the full swing of preparation for an action decided by the confederal leadership, and in the most serious circumstances, the reformists' federations and unions did not hesitate to act publicly against the CGT. [Within the CGT, the "union" gen-

erally meant the workplace unit. The CGT was structured as a two-part confederation, on one side through federations covering industries, and on the other side through local Bourses de Travail, roughly equivalent to Trades Councils].

In that way the reformist minority, always defeated at the congresses, got its revenge. But the "ultra-lefts", who were in the majority, were no less dangerous. Hervé's paper *La Guerre Sociale* gave them a platform, and there, in that company and in that paper, which was really without doctrine, they could give free rein to their demagoguery.

[*La Guerre Sociale (Social War)* was a weekly unofficial socialist and trade-union paper founded by Gustave Hervé. In its early years it was stridently anti-militarist and advocated a general strike to stop war (a slogan rejected by Lenin, Luxemburg, and others as fanciful); in 1914 it became stridently nationalist, changing its name in 1916 to *La Victoire (Victory)*].

More than once, the CGT was put into difficulties by them; more than once they made the CGT commit expensive errors.

Griffuelhes [general secretary of the CGT from 1901 to 1909, and also a member of the "Blanquist" strand of the French Socialist Party] noticed this danger, and, courageously, he jumped on Hervéism, not when the danger from it was past, but at the time when the threat from it was at its height.

LEADERS

[But] there was a wearing-out of activists. Pelloutier had had no successor as leader of the Fédération des Bourses.

[Fernand Pelloutier was the first leader of French revolutionary syndicalism, founding the Fédération des Bourses, a federation of local organisations similar to Trades Councils, in 1895. He died in 1901.] Griffuelhes, who had been for the CGT what Pelloutier had been for the Fédération des Bourses, would have no successor either.

He embodied the CGT throughout its best days, in the years when it was at its height. He had all the qualities of a leader: clear-sightedness, courage, the ability to make quick and definite decisions — and also some faults which made it difficult for him to cope with opposition and led him to abandon his leadership position suddenly. [He resigned in 1909 after a row over finance for the new CGT office in Paris. He remained active in the movement, and joined the Communist Party after World War One, but was never again central].

Griffuelhes' voluntary departure from the confederal secretaryship caused great unrest, thanks to which a dubious candidature won out but only for a very short time. [Louis Niel became secretary briefly]. Then [Léon] Jouhaux [who would remain secretary until 1947] was elected and held the position for lack of a rival.

Jouhaux was exactly the opposite of Griffuelhes, possessing no more qualities than an eloquence that was real but for public rallies. During the war, he learned the art of administration...

[As war loomed in July 1914, the CGT remained stridently anti-war. But it became more difficult to hold the line].

On Thursday 30 July panic seized Paris. It was expressed in a sort of paralysis. War was coming; life was stopping. There was a rush on the banks, which would pay out only 50 francs [150 euros] a fortnight. Cash was short: gold, and even silver, were being hoarded. The Bank of France put into circulation 5 and 10 franc notes.

On Saturday [1 August], towards the end of the afternoon, the paralysis suddenly sharpened. The buses had been requisitioned and stopped running...

In the days that followed, the city appeared to have been emptied of its population. There was life and movement only

Jean Jaurès addressing a demonstration a year before his assassination



around the train stations, or occasionally in some streets. And then it was parades of loud mobs, yelling “To Berlin! To Berlin!” and singing the Marseillaise [the French national anthem].

To feed their patriotic fervour, the leaders of those parades directed them here and there against “Boche” [German] shops...

Historians and writers have told us about the demonstrations which took place against the war in 1870 [when France’s Second Empire attacked Prussia, in a conflict deliberately provoked by Prussian chancellor Bismarck]. They were small demonstrations, quickly stifled. In August 1914, there was not even the equivalent.

The main reason was the sort of levée en masse constituted by the military mobilisation, and in the large size from the very start of the army, which incorporated in a single move the most active part of the population...

On Tuesday 4 August... the editorial of the *Bataille Syndicaliste* [BS, the official daily of the CGT] said:

“The time has come for the final and brutal argument from militarist, feudal, monarchic Germany...”

“There is no point going back to look for the deep causes of the frightening drama which is beginning. It is too late, or too soon.

“But the world has assessed the cause. It was Austria that set off the crisis; it was Germany that, first by its duplicity and then by its aggression, made the spark flare which has set all Europe alight.

“At least, that is all we can discern in France...”

“Our role is also clear: against the law of the jungle, against German militarism, we must save the democratic and revolutionary tradition of France”.

Jaurès was assassinated on Friday 31 July, at about 10pm. [Jean Jaurès was a Socialist Party leader, on the right wing of the party but widely popular and eloquently anti-war. He was murdered by an ultra-nationalist]. On Saturday 1 August, the call for general military mobilisation was put out at 4pm...

The CGT put out a manifesto to the proletarians of France...

“The forces of evil are on the point of triumphing. A glimmer of hope still remains, but so weak that we must reckon on the worst.

“Even if we are carried into the abyss, we want to retain the hope of a possible peace.

“The Confederal Committee [of the CGT] has remained at its battle-post, fighting for the cause of peace. Just yester-

day, it made a last appeal to the workers’ International...

“As firmly as before, we must stick with the whole of our ideas and our faith in their definitive triumph. The workers’ International will always remain our goal...”

[A few days later] the CGT and the Seine [Paris region] coordination of unions called on the workers to come en masse to Jaurès’s funeral [on 4 August] in order to demonstrate there “with calm and dignity”.

WHAT BAKUNIN SAID

A new column appeared in the *Bataille Syndicaliste* [BS, the official daily of the CGT]: “What Bakunin said”, and from then on it would reappear very frequently.

[Mikhail Bakunin led the wing of the First International which later came to call itself anarchist. He had been pro-France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and constantly championed what he considered the revolutionary spirit of the “Latin” and “Slavic” “races” against the “authoritarianism” which, he said, characterised Germans].

Among the speeches at Jaurès’s funeral, we need here note only Jouhaux’s. The BS of Wednesday [5 August] gave long extracts. Jouhaux first explained why the working class loved Jaurès, then he exclaimed:

“Today, it is still from our memories that we draw the strength we need. In the name of those who are going to war — including me — I declare that it is not hate of the German people which will impel us on to the battlefield, but hate of German imperialism”.

The BS reporter added:

“Applause erupted. Emotion was at its height. People wept. Maurice Barrès [a right-wing nationalist politician] clapped loudly and said to one of his neighbours: ‘Very good! Very good!’. A senator who was a sworn enemy of the CGT exclaimed: ‘And to think that these are the men whom we wanted to imprison!’”

[In the background of the CGT’s turnaround in August 1914 was “Carnet B”, a list of alleged “subversives” which the government was known to keep and to be likely to jail in case of war. In the event, none of the CGT leaders were jailed, and Jouhaux and his friends were not made to do military service, either.]

In the BS of Thursday 6 August, a new explanation of the war was given in an unsigned but prominent article:

“Let liberty flow from the conflict of two races! ... In the current conflict, the ethnic question has some weight. The Germans, with heavier blood, with a more submissive and resigned spirit, do not have our spirit of independence”.

However, the anonymous author said in his conclusion that it was only the “haughty and aggressive caste” [ruling Germany] which had to be defeated...

On Sunday 2 August, the first day of official military mobilisation, the Confederal Committee of the CGT had met in the afternoon. There was an atmosphere of defeat and of being crushed. At the meeting were men who that very evening were due to join troop trains...

One member of the committee, already half-drunk, interrupted with a patriotic sally, against Germany, against the “Boches” [chauvinist term for Germans, similar to “huns” in English]. This was the language of the ignorant crowds whom the nationalist leaders would soon lead to attack “Boche” shops.

A painful moment, which passed quickly. No-one had the heart to reply to these stupidities. The meeting discussed Jaurès’s funeral and the wreath the CGT should send. It sorted out details. There was no reference to Jouhaux making a speech there.

Had the CGT secretary already decided the line he would take? Did he already see clearly what his policy would be, and the confederal leadership’s? Probably not.

Doubtless with him it was not a sudden and total turnaround but rather a rapid drift. The negotiations about Carnet B, in which he had surely participated — directly or indirectly — had been the point of departure. That would lead him, within a few days, through the Committee of National Salvation [a government-sponsored committee in which he participated] to the union sacrée [the “holy alliance” of classes in wartime].

The new policy did not need to be spelled out, and it never would be, openly and clearly: it would be implied in deeds and actions...

On Tuesday 4 August Jouhaux made his speech at Jaurès’s funeral. At the same time posters appeared on the walls of Paris announcing the creation of the Committee of National Salvation, its aims, and its list of members.

Jouhaux claimed later that his speech caused no protest in the Confederal Committee, and that even that it was unanimously decided to print it. However, one thing is certain: from the next day, very clear reservations were expressed on the question of his participation in the Committee of National Salvation, a participation decided by Jouhaux alone, without any previous consultation with the committee...

In the report he made at the National Council of the metalworkers’ federation, in September 1917, [Alphonse] Merrheim [the metalworkers’ secretary, a courageous though cautious internationalist during the war, who after 1918 moved to the right]... gave details...

He recalled that, the day after Jaurès’s funeral, on the question of Committee of National Salvation, the metalworkers’ secretariat warned the CGT bureau and Confederal Committee against too close a collaboration, which would annihilate the independence of the CGT.

He said how, when visiting the office of the *Bataille Syndicaliste* on 2 September, he learned by chance that the confederal secretary [Jouhaux] and some other activists were leaving for Bordeaux, following the government [which had fled lest the Germans take Paris].

He recounted the discussion which obliged the confederal secretary to delay his departure by 24 hours and convene the Confederal Committee; he recalled the decision of the committee, which passively tolerated the departure for Bordeaux, since the confederal secretary had declared that whatever the Committee decided he would go anyway.

Merrheim said that it was at that meeting that comrade Lenoir recalled the principles of the CGT and specifically declared that the war was not our war. That earned him a scornful reply from the confederal secretary...

In an empty and overwhelmed Paris — overwhelmed spiritually — we set out, [Pierre] Monatte and I, to find the islets of resistance which still existed. [They went out visiting old comrades, one by one, being disappointed in most cases but, one by one, recruiting a small group who would raise again the banner of socialism, class struggle, and internationalism. Around and after the end of World War One, many millions would rally round that banner].

Greek cleaners' strike: we are no longer scared!

On 30 June the Greek civil service union ADEDY began a series of protests which will culminate in a strike on 9 July.

The protests are against the public sector mobility scheme which has been in operation since September 2013. Under the scheme selected workers, predominantly the lowest paid, have their wages cut by 25%, are put into a redeployment pool and are sacked if no alternative job is found. The scheme was a way for the tripartite government of Pasok-ND-Democratic Left to immediately sack 4,000 civil servants, and a further 11,000 by the end of 2014.

595 cleaners at the Ministers of Finance and Administrative Reform were one of the first group of workers to be placed under the scheme. Their union (POE DOY) put up only token resistance, with a couple of work stoppages. But cleaners decided to strike and have been striking ever since.

For 10 months the entrance of the Ministry of Finance on the Karageorgi Serbia Street in Athens has been occupied by the cleaners. It has become a centre of struggle against Greek Memorandum politics, poverty and misery.

At that point, the government, with the full assistance of the bureaucratic trade unions and the reformist left in the labour movement, had already broken a teachers' strike, had laid off 2,500 media workers by closing the state-owned ERT broadcaster, and had sacked thousands of school guards.

The targeting of the cleaners was not random. The government thought they were dealing with quiet, timid women who would not dare to react and who would accept their "black" future without question. Yet exactly ten months on, the heroic cleaners have not surrendered and continue their class struggle despite their huge financial problems and the violence of the riot police.

"Many of us were not politicised, this was our first demonstration and experience of class struggle. But I'm proud of my female counterparts. Because we became class fighters to assert the obvious, the right to work, the ability to envision a better life," says cleaners' representative Evangelia Alexakis.

The cleaners have organised daily protests outside ministries, tax offices and spearheaded protests and occupations. With their witty slogans and unparalleled militancy they have created a political issue that the government has been unable to manage.

Meanwhile the struggle became a reference point for the entire working class, for all oppressed members of society, because in the tenacity and courage of the cleaners they saw their own cravings for a decisive struggle.

From the first day, there were dozens of resolutions of support from dozens of rank-and-file militant trade unions, associations, political organisations and collectives. Workers, unemployed, pensioners and youth visited the cleaners at their centre of struggle, giving them courage to continue.

"Let the government send riot police, let the government send us to hospital. We are like the Lernaia Hydra. For every two of us who are injured and send to hospitals, ten more



Cleaners' demonstration outside Ministry of Finance on 12 June is attacked by police

cleaners will join the struggle. We are not scared anymore!"

The cleaners went to the courts for an injunction against the mobility scheme demanding a reversal of the government's decision. Judge G Kyriakou accepted their request to get their jobs back.

On 15 May the Athens court ruled it illegal that 397 of 595 had been put under the scheme and ordered their immediate reinstatement. The courts said the jobs of cleaners were "manifestly necessary" and that the proposed replacement services of private subcontractors were contrary to the public interest. The decision was taken just one day before the end of the eight month time scale of the mobility scheme, just before the cleaners were going to be officially unemployed.

The government saw the decision as a fundamental attack and appealed to the Supreme Court. The government was admitting the political centrality of the cleaners' struggle and of the judge's decision. This is the ruling class democracy: a total disrespect and overturning of their own institutions if they do not comply with Troika policies, financial oligarchy and vulture capitalism.

On 12 June the Supreme Court reversed the court's decision. The Court's final decision will be delivered on 23 September. Until then the cleaners will remain sacked.

Immediately after the decision there was spontaneous militant protest outside the Treasury, with the sacked cleaners leading the protest and clashing with the riot police who tried to stop them. By exhibiting class solidarity, militancy and determination and going far beyond the timid response of their trade unions the fired cleaners defended the right to work and to life, they showed that the right to dignity comes before any government, any memoranda, any troika court. Our only law is the right of the worker.

On the same day the ND-Pasok government instructed the riot police to attack both the cleaners and 45 redundant steelworkers who were protesting outside the Ministry. Batons,

chemicals and riot shields were used against the demonstrators when they attempted to make a symbolic blocking of the entrance of the building. Dozens were injured.

"The Supreme Court unfortunately entangled things. They have proven that justice is not neutral. The decision stated that the country is in immediate need and an emergency situation and that the country will be saved if 595 cleaners are sacked!" commented caustically Evangelia Alexakis.

"The government is trying to get power from the fear of citizens, workers. We are not afraid of them anymore. Let's make it clear to them; we cleaners have overcome our fears. We have decided, we are going to enjoy a summer of struggles. Our home is now this street 'Karageorgi Serbia' (i.e. outside the Ministry of Finance). This street should be renamed as 'Street of the Cleaners Struggle'. We will not go if we do not win!"

On Tuesday 17 June the cleaners held a protest rally outside the Byzantine Museum together with employees of the Ministry of Culture, to coincide with an informal meeting of EU officials.

Two days later the sacked cleaners symbolically blockaded the entrance to the offices of New Democracy. This followed a symbolic blockage of the offices of Pasok. After their meeting with a representative of ND the sacked cleaners made the following media statement: "Both Pasok and New Democracy [have] denounced the layoffs, recognised the rightness of our struggle and advocated our reinstatement. They told us that they cannot do anything about it as it is up to the government, not the parties that support the government. Our response to them is clear cut: we are cleaners, not idiots!"

Evangelia Alexakis has said the arguments by the government and their media acolytes that "cost savings can be achieved" if the services offered by the cleaners are to be subcontracted as fabricated and fake. "When at court our lawyer asked for evidence from the Finance Ministry... We do not believe that we are more costly than the sub-contractors and we believe that we can do a much better job."

But she rushed to explain: "Not because our female colleagues in the private sector do not work hard. I am in solidarity with the private sector cleaners with their despicable working conditions and two euros per hours wages, of crazy schedules, no materials to clean and no recognition of the unions. Whoever dares to resist is in physical danger."

An organisation to co-ordinate the struggle of workers in the mobility scheme has been created and is organising joint action.

What is needed is a militant movement of wholesale rupture and confrontation against the whole of the governmental agenda that will restart sectoral and general strikes, something the government is so scared of, to embolden and cement the hope and confidence of the working class people and popular strata.

Bad for USA, automatically good for us?

The Left
By Beth Redmond



Since about 1987, and until recently, the standard SWP line has been to support any force clashing with the USA as "anti-imperialist". The battles in Syria since 2011 have put that line into question; and the current clash between ISIS on one side, and the US, Iranian, Syrian, and Iraqi governments on the other, even more so. The SWP does not back ISIS.

Yet in an interview in *Socialist Worker* (28 June), Alex Callinicos claims a sort of good side to the ISIS victories. Because "the US has been weakened", "movements from below can strike real blows — not just against US power or the power of particular ruling classes, but against the whole system."

Whilst this may be true, Callinicos fails to acknowledge that movements from below are also capable of striking real blows to the revolutionary movements of those countries. It is naïve and unhelpful to suggest that opposition to, or feelings of discontent toward a ruling class will successfully birth a revolution. It can also lead to the development of oppor-

tunist and sectarian politics, especially where an organised revolutionary socialist party is lacking.

There is also much fantasy about Callinicos's excitement about the USA being weakened. He hints: "Wow! The USA is weaker, so with one more heave we, the SWP, can see them off".

The USA is weakened; but it is still very strong. Simplifying such a complex situation is dangerous. Failing to identify countries which aren't Britain, Russia the US, or any other "big name imperialists" as exactly that, imperialists, will lead to confused politics which do not reflect reality, and analyses which do not put working-class movements at their core.

The most interesting thing in *Socialist Worker* of 28 June, however, is another article which, apparently without the SW editors noticing, says crisply what is wrong with Callinicos's weird optimism.

A Lebanese socialist, Bassem Chit, writes: "The recent events in Iraq are not, as many wish them to be, an upsurge in revolutionary politics. They sadly mark a deviation towards more regressive and sectarian politics.

"And it is important to state that overwhelming dissatisfac-

tion does not by its mere existence translate into a revolution, or an uprising. It can also become a breeding ground for sectarian and counter-revolutionary politics.

"This is most true in the absence of a unified popular movement, and more importantly, of an organised revolutionary party".

Corey Oakley of the Australian group Socialist Alternative (a splinter from the SWP's international network in the early 90s) has made the same point in *SALT's* paper *Red Flag* (1 July):

"If your political approach boils down to putting a tick wherever the US and Israel put a cross, you will quickly find yourself tied in knots. The driving force behind the misery inflicted daily on millions of people across the Arab world, brought to fever pitch in Iraq and Syria at the moment, is not an all-powerful US empire, but a complex system of conflict and shifting alliances between the ruling classes of states big and small.

"All of these ruling classes are driven by the same pragmatic capitalist logic: make alliances and fight wars based on what will improve your geostrategic position and secure the greatest economic and political advantage relative to your rivals."

Who are the Russian separatists?

By Dale Street

On 20 June Petro Poroshenko, the recently elected President of Ukraine, announced a 15-point peace plan. This included a seven-day ceasefire in the fighting in the south-east of the country, subsequently extended for another three days.

On Monday 30 June Poroshenko called off the ceasefire. In the course of this ceasefire separatists had carried out 108 attacks, killing 27 Ukrainian soldiers and wounding another 69.

It seems that Poroshenko had hoped that the European Union would pressurise Putin into pressuring the more politically-minded elements amongst the separatists into pressurising the armed factions to agree to a real ceasefire.

But the EU is still mulling over whether to introduce sanctions against Russian businesses. A Ukraine weakened by internal conflicts suits Putin's political goals. And it is far from clear whether the armed separatists would take their lead from the "political wing" of the separatist project.

(Tsaryov and DPR "Prime Minister" Borodai took part in "consultative" talks in the first week of the ceasefire. But for the likes of Gubarev, Strelkov and Bolotov, the conflict is primarily a military one. And DPR "head of government" Pushilin has been sidelined, at least for the time being.)

Although Poroshenko has left the door open to a restoration of the ceasefire, his stated goal is to defeat the armed separatists in a military conflict. But, thanks to imports from Russia, the separatists are well armed and well organised. And they are based in centres of population.

Large-scale use of heavy artillery, which is what the Ukrainian forces appear to be relying on, will cause civilian casualties and fatalities and the destruction of civilian infrastructures (and has already done so).

The separatists will exploit such death and destruction in order to step up their propaganda about the "fascist" government in Kiev and their calls for Russia to send in a "peace-keeping" force.

So too will all the other forces of reaction which have adopted south-east Ukraine as their political cause of the day: Russian White-imperialists, Russian ultra-nationalists, Eurasians, Stalinist nostalgics, and Russian-Orthodox fundamentalists.

As a result, issues which could unite workers throughout Ukraine — falling living standards, growing inequality, corruption, deteriorating social services — will continue to be sidelined, along with the voices of those socialists who could present a political alternative to the descent into a prolonged and bloody military conflict.

During the initial seven-day ceasefire separatists shot down a Ukrainian helicopter, periodically bombarded Kramatorsk and Donetsk airports, launched a series of attacks on roadblocks manned by Ukrainian troops, and seized the National Guard barracks in Donetsk.

During the early part of the ceasefire the separatists issued statements claiming that their military actions were in response to Ukrainian aggression. By the end of the ceasefire the separatists' statements simply cited their activities as examples of their supposed military prowess.

In addition, there was the usual daily diet of apparently random killings, railway lines being blown up, abductions of newspaper editors and others, stolen cars, plundered shops, and miscellaneous occupations of buildings and workplaces.

Just two hours before the expiry of the seven-day ceasefire, Strelkov (the Russian commander of the separatist forces) issued a statement rejecting an extension of the ceasefire: "We will not observe a ceasefire under such conditions." (Strelkov wants the complete withdrawal of all Ukrainian forces from the south-east.)

At the same time Gubarev (self-proclaimed "people's governor" of the "Donetsk People's Republic") issued a statement of his own, rejecting any further talks on the grounds that they would be "pointless". The Donbas, he wrote, "is the heart of Russia! Thus it was, thus it must be, and thus it will be."

On the "political front", the separatists were no less active during the initial ceasefire (which Poroshenko had linked to proposals for: separatists to lay down their arms; Russian fighters to return to Russia; local militia to be amnestied; government powers to be decentralised).



The "Supreme Soviet of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)" and the "Supreme Soviet of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR)" both voted unanimously to create a "Union of People's Republics" (UPR).

The UPR's initial affiliates are the DPR and the LPR, but membership has been declared open to the (six) other Ukrainian regions which constituted historical "Novorossiya".

Two days later, the first meeting of the Parliament of the UPR — 30 delegates from the DPR, and 30 from the LPR — unanimously elected Oleg Tsaryov (former businessman and former Ukrainian MP for the Party of the Regions) as President.

(Not that any members of these "Soviets" and "Parliament" had actually been elected by anybody. And to add a further layer of confusion: the proclamation of the UPR contradicted the proclamation by DPR and LPR leaders in mid-May of the creation of a new and unified state of Novorossiya.)

Halfway through the ceasefire the DPR and the LPR proudly announced that their sovereignty had been officially recognised by South Ossetia (whose own "sovereignty" is devoid of international recognition).

The DPR also announced no less proudly that it had created its own KGB and a "Mobilising Department" within its "Ministry of Defence", in order to recruit more people into its armed forces and promote a more patriotic education amongst the local population.

The LPR had no need to resurrect the KGB. In mid-June it had already announced the creation of "Smersh" (Russian shorthand for: Death to Spies), the name of the counter-espionage organisation created by Stalin in 1943.

ABSURDITIES

On the ideological/propaganda front, the separatist leaders continued throughout the ceasefire to try to build a popular base of support through a combination of political absurdities and political reaction.

Phosphorous bombs and poison gas, they claimed, had been used by the Ukrainian military. Concentration camps were being planned. 250,000 inhabitants of western Ukraine were to be re-settled in the south-east. And the proposed creation of a buffer zone with Russia would result in five million people being driven out of their homes. (1)

Just one day after the start of the ceasefire DPR/LPR leaders issued statements calling for Russian intervention on the basis that:

"What real genocide means is now visible — the elimination of a people because of its ethnicity... In Ukraine the Banderite authorities are striving to resurrect fascism in Europe. Ukrainian Nazis have promised to wipe us from the face of the earth. ... In such a Nazi Ukraine we cannot live any longer." (2)

At a DPR rally held in Donetsk on 22 June — mostly attended by "pensioners, neo-Stalinists, and Russian chauvinists and nationalists", according to one local report — the crowd chanted: "Russia! Russia! Death to the Nazi Occupiers! Victory Will be Ours! Let us Fertilise Our Land with the Corpses of the Ukrainian-Fascist Occupiers!" (3)

Speaking at the same rally, Gubarev claimed: "They (the militia) are ready to take up weapons and go to their deaths for the freedom of our land from fascism, which has again raised its head." (3)

Alongside the theme of Kiev fascism and genocide ran the historical revisionism that Ukraine was a fiction:

"There is no Ukraine. It is a soap bubble, thought up so that Slavs fight against one another. Ukraine has burst, it does not exist, because something created artificially cannot exist for long. But we remember our history, handed down to us from our ancestors in our genes." (4)

The ceasefire also saw ongoing attempts to rally support on the basis of anti-gay bigotry — for the pro-Russia separatists, legal protection for gay rights in the EU is "proof" that Ukraine should not join the EU — and a ramping up of attempts to equate the separatists' cause with defence of the Russian-Orthodox Church

Under the headline "In Ukraine the Sodomite Anti-Russian Gay Parade 'Kiev-Pride 2014' Will Be Taking Place" the ideologists of the DPR/LPR explained the linkage between homosexuality and (Ukrainian) fascism:

"The anti-Russian Sodomite parade is a natural continuation of the major anti-Russian campaign launched this week by the US President Joe Biden. Many people in Russia still do not know that homosexuality and fascism are related phenomena. ..."

"The civil chaos underway in Ukraine in recent months clearly demonstrates that fascism and sexual perversions are based on the same values and are of the same pathological nature. The phenomenon of Euro-gay-fascism has deep roots in the ritualistic sodomy of the German SS. ..." (5)

Or, as an article on another pro-separatist website put it more bluntly: "As if the one thing the leaders of the genocide need is the support of homosexuals — the sick will cure the sick! Our traditions allow such 'people' to be sent to Siberia, to work on the virgin lands!" (6)

More noteworthy than this deranged but "opportunistic" attack on Kiev-Pride 2014 was the equating of the pro-Russian separatism with a "holy war" in defence of Russian-Orthodoxy.

According to the LPR "Minister of Education", Lesya Laptevyva, speaking at a rally in Lugansk last Sunday:

"This war which has come into our home is also cultural and religious. The lords in Kiev have declared today that they want to transform the Russian Orthodox Church into the (Ukrainian Catholic) Uniate Church and subordinate it to the Vatican. They don't just want to take our land from us but our religious faith as well." (7)

The same day armed separatists explained in a widely posted recruitment video clip: "This war is a religious war. For Banderist money, agents of the Vatican, splitters, heretics fight against us, all of them traitors to Christ. And that's why this war is a religious one." (8)

In the separatists' stronghold of Slaviansk, three flags now fly above the occupied regional administration offices and on roadblocks around the town: the flag of the DPR, the Stalinist "Victory Flag" (commemorating the victory of 1945) and the "Flag of Faith". (9)

The latter dates from the seventeenth century and portrays the face of Christ. The full version of the flag carries the slogan: "For Our Faith. For the Tsar. For Holy Triune Rus." (10) Triune Rus refers to three parts of Russia (Great, Little and White) being united in a single Rus.)

Whatever backroom deals and double-dealing may be in the process of being cooked up behind closed doors, in the south-east of Ukraine it is people who live some four centuries in the past who are now setting the pace.

Notes

1. <http://rusvesna.su/tmp/593982404>
2. <http://novorossia.su/ru/node/2968>
3. <http://novosti.dn.ua/details/228127/>
4. <http://rusvesna.su/news/1403376284>
5. <http://rusvesna.su/news/1403910903>
6. <http://novorus.info/news/events/24368-lgbt-pomogut-fashist-skoy-vlasti.html>
7. <http://www.0642.ua/news/565750>
8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68NfXj0dDAk>
9. See 1.32, 2.30 and 3.13 at: <http://rusvesna.su/news/1404078960>
10. For pictures of the full version of the flag being paraded through Slaviansk by Strelkov, see: <http://www.unian.net/politics/934240-strelkov-s-terroristami-proshli-po-slavyansku-s-ikonami-foto.html>



Kuchuz Day Out

Q news

By Paul Penny



“I’ve been attacked by homophobes” was the shocking Facebook message from H, a young gay Ugandan man as he lay hospitalised on a bed.

H’s friends urgently contacted the local LGBT security team for help, as they were concerned for H’s safety when he returned home, and worried about his medical bills. The security team promised assistance, but for reasons unknown the assistance never came. H and his friends felt incredibly let down.

Outcasts of society since the passing of the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014, many LGBT people are forced to live in the worse inner-city slum districts and struggle to just survive. They are frequently denied employment and forced to move regularly from unsafe accommodation to avoid attack by neighbours. Many are living with HIV and struggle to access and afford medication.

Very upset and angry, H wrote: “I hear everyone everywhere talking about Pride, but me myself, I think there is no need of informing people like us, not the grassroots. All you did nothing to help people on the grassroots yet you knew the situation and problems. Am sorry but I feel so disappointed.

“Just recently I was beaten up by homophobes, but it’s weird and regrettable, because huh, even security team did nothing to help me anymore in the situation I was, and in the situation I am. We are suffering here with no proper medication, no food, no shelters, others they chased us from home and we ended up on the streets, fuck! And now you’re talking about pride. Your money never reaches us here in the slums, nothing we gain. Stop being selfishness.”

The homophobic attack on H spurred LGBT rights activist Frank Kanya of the Youth on Rock Foundation to organise a gathering of the local “Kuchu” (slang LGBT) to promote togetherness among the LGBT community living on the frontline in the slum districts of Kampala.

On 28 June, as Pride was taking place across the world, almost 100 “Kuchu” came together on a beach on the banks of Lake Victoria to celebrate LGBT solidarity. The event was entitled “Kuchuz Day Out” and Frank Kanya explained the importance of the event:

- To promote togetherness among the grassroots LGBTIQ community.
- To learn from each other how best to live in Uganda despite the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act.
- To attract a strong group of volunteer activists who can continue supporting LGBTIQ individuals and advocating for their rights.
- To brainstorm on how to strengthen personal security and safety as an LGBTIQ community.
- To interact on the beach with the heterosexual community, to try to understand their current perceptions, and to provide a model for how the wider community and LGBTIQ persons can live harmoniously together.
- To raise self-esteem among LGBTIQ people by sharing testimonies and personal stories.

Frank Kanya said afterwards. “It was a day of fun and a sign of togetherness, solidarity, organising, networking, re-energising, and thinking beyond what we go through living in an anti-gay country.”

• www.rainbow-international-fund.org

Yes, Yarl’s Wood needs to close

Becky Crocker reviews Radio Four’s “File on 4”, broadcast on Sunday 24 June

Radio Four’s “File on Four” examines reports of mistreatment of detainees in Yarl’s Wood immigration detention centre, which holds up to 400 women and is run by private company, SERCO. The program asks, “Is it time to close down Yarl’s Wood?”

To help us answer, it details medical neglect, a dismissive attitude towards mental health issues and numerous instances of sexually inappropriate conduct by staff towards female detainees.

The program records the funeral of Christine Case, a Jamaican woman, who died in Yarl’s Wood on 31st March 2014. Her family tells the program that Christine’s medical problems were neglected.

Post traumatic stress disorder and psychotic episodes are not treated seriously. Noel, a psychiatric nurse, resigned in 2013 after raising concerns about the systems to protect vulnerable Yarl’s Wood detainees. Speaking publicly for the first time, he recalls that his concerns about the mental health of a detainee were dismissed. The detainee subsequently harmed herself but received no medical treatment for 16 hours.

On questioning SERCO about this incident, the program received the response: “a member of staff was consequently dismissed following disciplinary proceedings”. As the program progresses, it appears that SERCO habitually disciplines individual staff, while denying underlying institutional issues.

We hear testimonies from women about a culture where sexual favours are traded between guards and female detainees. One woman recalls how a guard “made advances” on her. She is asked whether “consent” can exist between staff and detainees? “Hell, no!” she exclaims. “They promise these vulnerable women that if you open your legs for me, then you will get your leave to stay”.

SERCO denies an endemic culture of sexual exploitation. But according to Labour’s Keith Vaz, Chair of Parliament’s Home Affairs Select Committee, which is currently investigating sexually inappropriate conduct by Yarl’s Wood staff, there have been 15 complaints against SERCO. Seven employees have been dismissed in six years. To him, this is just “the tip of the iceberg”.

The trigger for the Parliamentary investigation was an allegation by a woman from Pakistan, whose case was made



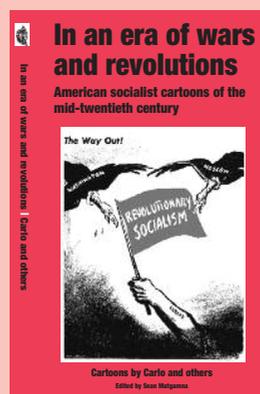
public last month. The woman told the program how a male nurse had touched her “private parts” against her wishes. Showing characteristic disbelief of a woman’s word, SERCO and Bedfordshire police investigated and dismissed the allegations; internal investigators thought she had invented them to assist her immigration case. As she put it, “They said I am making up stories. I don’t understand. If I made it up, then why did they pay me compensation?”

For Keith Vaz, the root of these problems lies with SERCO. His recommended solution is that the Government should not renew SERCO’s contract. In his words, it’s not “money well spent”. For him, there is no alternative to detention; the issue is that women should be treated “fairly” while they are detained.

But what would it mean to treat women “fairly”? Yes, women should not be neglected or sexually abused at the hands of the state. That should be a given. But detention is inherently laden with injustice. At the beginning of the program, a current detainee describes the view from her window: “You can only see the gate, the first is huge and the second is barbed wire...you see nothing, just fields and gates surrounding. It just looks a prison”. Detention essentially means that people are put in prison for applying for asylum or crossing a border. There is no way of making this “fair”.

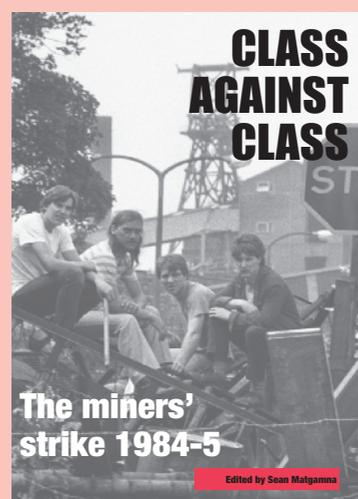
So, the answer to the program’s question is yes. In light of the evidence of abuse and fundamentally because migrants are not criminals, yes, Yarl’s Wood needs to close.

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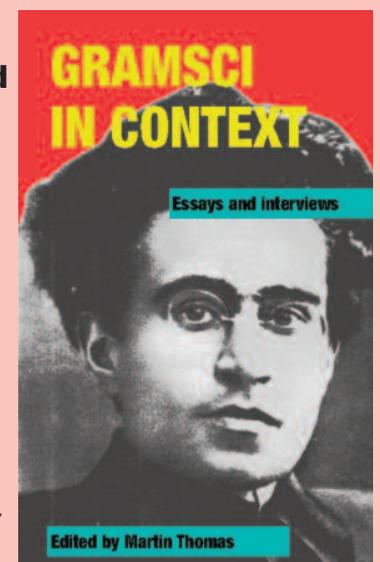
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Keep up support for Lambeth college strike!

By Katy Dollar

Teaching staff at Lambeth College have now been on strike for five weeks (4 July).

The workers are fighting new contracts that attack pay and conditions, which would affect all new workers and create a two-tier

workforce at the college. It is a critical dispute, the outcome of which could help or hinder conditions for many other workers in further education.

Representatives of the University and College Union and Lambeth College bosses have now restarted negotiations.

The new contracts in-

clude: an increase in working hours, and a lower hourly rate of pay, reduced holiday, reduced sick pay.

Unison members at the college have also taken two short strikes.

Management at the College have tried to use the anti-trade union laws to stop the democratic decision of UCU members to strike.

They have used intimidating tactics against strikers threatening trade union reps with completely spurious disciplinary charges for their role in the dispute. They have threatened not to negotiate as long as the strike continues.

But the strike is having a huge effect. Classes have been cancelled, enrolment is

down.

As negotiations restart it is important that trade unionists, community and student activists get down to the picket lines to boost support for the strike.

More on how to support and donate here:
lambethcollegestrike.wordpress.com

University workers plan next steps

By Will Green

Despite five days of strikes in June, the University of London has continued with its plan to close the Garden Halls of residence, with the loss of around 80 jobs. The halls closed on 30 June, and many of the former Garden Halls workers are now on temporary summer contracts at other university sites until mid-September.

The University of London Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB) branch is now considering its next steps. These include investigating the possibility of an industrial tribunal claim, following al-



legations that IWGB activists were discriminated against for their union activities when it came to filling permanent positions on University contracts.

As *Solidarity* has previously reported, the Cleaning Services Manager who oversaw the job losses at the halls is also a rep for Unison at the site, now a minority union amongst outsourced staff. Unison activists should highlight this scan-

dal and demand accountability from the Unison Senate House Branch and Greater London Region.

Despite the loss of the Garden Halls jobs, the IWGB is continuing to recruit in new areas at the University and now represents around 211 members.

IWGB President Jason Moyer-Lee told *Solidarity*: "The rapid growth of new members of the IWGB University of London branch goes to show that people want to join a fighting union, a union which defends workers' rights, and a union which cares more about its members than about cosy relations with the employer."

Action on London Underground

By Ollie Moore

Power control workers on London Underground began an eight-day strike on Tuesday 1 July. Workers are resisting attacks on terms and conditions, and want conditions for formerly-outsourced workers to be levelled-up. Members of the RMT, TSSA, and Unite unions are participating in the strike.

London Underground

station staff are also discussing the possibility of taking further action in their ongoing jobs dispute, as talks have found LU bosses desperate to weasel out of a commitment they made not to cut pay for workers affected by their planned reorganisation of the staffing model. The RMT union remains opposed to the company's plan to cut 953 jobs and close 270 ticket offices.

As *Solidarity* went to press, cleaners employed by

ISS on London Underground were back in talks with their management, as RMT members resist the introduction of "biometric fingerprinting" machines the company wants workers to use to book on for shifts.

A boycott of the machines by workers has pushed back implementation several times. Cleaners' reps say they believe strikes will be necessary to get ISS to abandon the plan.

Powell-Davies gains 27% of vote

By Charlotte Zeleus

Despite leftie-bashing by the *Times* newspaper, with the help of former General Secretary Fred Jarvis, a sizeable minority of National Union of Teachers members voted for LANAC NUT General Secretary candidate Martin Powell-Davies.

Martin, who stood on a platform calling for escalated and co-ordinated industrial action against

Gove's measures, gained 27% of the vote against incumbent Christine Blower. The result was declared on 25 June.

The lack of union publicity about the election was reflected in the very poor 13% turnout. It cannot have been helped by the union repeatedly marching members up the hill into strike action only to demobilise them for months at a time.

The 10 July strike action must not be allowed to become yet another example

of this pattern.

LANAC is also standing Patrick Murphy for the position of Deputy General Secretary. Nominations close on 1 December. It will be important to build on the result of the General Secretary election. NUT members should urge their associations to hold hustings for the two candidates.

This will be as much of a referendum on the current union leadership's policy as the General Secretary election was.

RMT removes support for the People's Pledge

By a delegate

The RMT union held its AGM in Bristol 22-27 June.

A resolution calling on the Labour Party to make a clear general election commitment to bringing the railway back into public ownership carried unanimously.

Delegates resolved that RMT should use all available channels to press for this demand, and work with fellow unions in the "Action for Rail" campaign in the run up to the General Election.

However, within the week, the shadow chancellor Ed Balls told the BBC's Andrew Marr "I don't want to go back to the nationalisation of the 1970s" and "I don't think we want to go back to the British Rail of the 70s". "Let's have a competitive process on a level playing field but without ideology. We're not going to say this is about nationalisation or privatisation."

A resolution to withdraw RMT support from the People's Pledge carried after a convincing argument that the Pledge was wrong not only because it put RMT in alliance with many Tory, Unionist, and UKIP pro-cuts, anti-trade union MPs, but because it would likely

help UKIP candidates get elected and the Conservative Party win the election.

An appeal to the AGM against a decision by the Council of Executives to remove all reference to the Labour Party from the rule-book fell.

After a lively exchange of views, delegates voted to support an essentially pro-Assad resolution on Syria that called on the AGM to express its solidarity with the General Federation of Trade Unions of Syria, a nominally independent organisation that is funded by the government and closely linked to the ruling party.

An appeal against a decision by the Council of Executives on fracking (hydraulic fracturing) was lost. The AGM voted not to support "Green Bans", a remarkable form of environmental activism initiated by the progressive Builders Labourers Federation in Australia in the 1970s, and regarded by many as one of the most imaginative and creative workers' actions in the past 50 years.

In the decision, the AGM also agreed to uphold a double-edged policy to oppose fracking and at the same time support the transportation of any by-product of fracking.

Ritz workers strike again



Workers at the Ritz cinema have now taken seven days of strike ac-

tion and are calling for a complete boycott of the Picturehouse chain.

They are striking again on Sunday 6 July. Their union, BECTU, has called a national demonstration of all cinema workers for in solidarity.

BECTU CINEMA WORKERS RALLY
Thursday 17 July
1pm BFI South Bank to
4pm GLA Tower Bridge

Brian Munro, 1968-2014

Brian Munro, a London Underground worker, RMT Executive member, and former member of Workers' Liberty and its predecessor group Socialist Organiser, died on Saturday 28 June after a long battle with ocular melanoma, an extremely rare form of eye cancer.

Brian fought the disease, and significantly outlived his initial prognosis. He died peacefully surrounded by his family in an East London hospice.

Brian was born in Glasgow in 1968, and joined *Socialist Organiser* (later AWL) in 1992. He was a member until the late 1990s. In the 1990s he began working on the railway — first in the ticket office at Waterloo mainline station, then as a guard and then a driver on London Underground's Bakerloo Line.

He became Branch Secretary of the RMT's Bakerloo branch in the late 90s, going on to become one of the RMT London Transport Region's longest-serving Branch Secretaries. In late 2013, he was elected to the London Transport Region seat on the RMT's Executive, beginning his term of office in January 2014.

Friends, colleagues, and comrades remember Brian as a tireless fighter for workers' rights and socialist politics, taking the same spirit into the fight against his cancer. He is survived by his partner, Lucy, and two young children.

His funeral will take place on Friday 11 July at 12.15pm at Manor Park Cemetery, Sebert Rd, London E7 0NP.





Iran-Iraq-Syria: the triple alliance

By Simon Nelson

In a 2011 interview with Associated Press, Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki stated, “The killing or removal of President Bashar in any way will explode into an internal struggle between two groups and this will have an impact on the region.”

The Iraqi Government was one of only three states in the 22 strong Arab League not to back Syria’s suspension in 2011, when the revolt in Syria began, then as a broad mass movement for democracy against Assad’s police state. Maliki had spent his time in exile from Saddam Hussein not in the US or Britain, as many other exiles did, but in Iran and Syria.

Iraq’s support for Assad, though lower-key than Iran’s and Russia’s, has

helped to maintain his access to weapons, intelligence and supplies during an incredibly destructive and bloody conflict.

Iraq has remained in close collaboration with the Syrian regime since the beginning of the rebellion against Assad in 2011. Assad and al Maliki and the Iranian Government have combined to form a strong Shia dominated sectarian bloc in the Middle East.

The Shia-sectarian nature of the Iraqi Government, and Maliki’s consequent conflicts with Sunni, Kurdish and secular elements from Iraqi politics, have given him a vested interest in the continuing domination in Syria of the Alawi Shia sect, of which Assad is part.

Direct military collaboration between Assad and Maliki, with the bombing

of Raqqa by the Syrian air-force against ISIS, is a sign of a growing and open alliance between the two regimes who now see a large swathe of their countries falling under the ISIS rule.

Iraq has allowed free passage of Iranian arms, fighters and supplies to the Syrian army and Shia militias. The Iraqi government says that its own inspections of Iranian planes has

found them only to be carrying civilian aid but that relates to just two planes searched. It is almost impossible for the arms that continue to flow from Iran to the Syrian Government to come through any other route. Thousands of Iraqi Shia militia have crossed into Syria since 2011 in order to fight the Sunni majority rebels.

The pressure from US Secretary of State John Kerry for a “more inclusive” Iraqi Government cuts across the USA’s current temporary de facto alliance with Iran against ISIS. The Iranian regime has backed Maliki since he first came to power and wants him to continue.



US courts strangle Argentina

By Colin Foster

On 29 June Argentina went into technical default on its foreign debt. 30 days “grace” expires on 29 July. Either the Argentine government fixes a deal before then, or the default goes into full force.

This drama is the outcome of 13 years’ legal wranglings since Argentina defaulted on its debt in 2001. Then, as usually happens in such cases, the Argentine government negotiated a deal with the bondholders to pay them off at a reduced rate.

In the Argentine case, though, some “vulture funds” which had bought Argentine bonds cheap in the run-up to the deal refused to play. They went to court to demand 100% payment on their bonds.

Argentina, like many other countries, had issued its bonds not under Argentine law, but under US law, so as to increase bond-buyers’ confidence and willingness to buy. Thus the case went to the US courts, which have finally and definitively decided in favour

of the “vulture funds”.

To complicate things, it is now illegal for Argentina to continue paying the old bondholders according to the 2001 deal.

Either the Argentine government will strike a compromise with the “vulture funds” — one which will surely mean severe cuts in Argentina in order to swell the already-bursting wallets of New York financiers — or it will comprehensively default, and this time without any early prospect of a deal like 2001’s.

An economic crisis in Argentina of some scale or another seems almost inevitable, and may spread.

The orthodox financial journalist Felix Salmon comments that “the ruling will make it more difficult for countries to free themselves from the burden of over-indebtedness. It will be very bad for international capital markets”.

The crisis could lead to pressure for hard-pressed governments to have legal rights to the same access to “easy” default as individuals and corporations, and that would be a good move.



ISIS declares caliphate

On 30 June, the Sunni-Islamist group ISIS declared its leader the “caliph” — the religious-political supreme ruler — of all Muslims worldwide.

The “caliph”, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, promised to “trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy and uncover its deviant nature”.

He also called on Muslims worldwide to migrate to the territory which ISIS now rules, stretching through Syria and Iraq from the borders of Turkey almost to the borders of Iran.

All the neighbouring states, and world powers like the USA and Russia and China, have a vital interest in quelling ISIS’ pretensions.

They will surely be able to limit further expansion by ISIS. ISIS has reportedly been more cautious in the Iraqi cities which it has seized than in areas of Syria where it has gained control and recklessly imposed sectarian terror and clerical-fascist regimentation. However, its proclamations are ostentatiously designed to scare and antagonise Iraq’s Shia majority.

It is doubtful, however, whether the de-facto grand alliance against ISIS can retake the cities it has seized any time soon.

Twice during the US occupation of Iraq, the US retook Fallujah from ISIS-predecessor forces that had seized it. Even then, with the US military having almost unlimited re-

sources and freedom of action in the area, the US had difficulty and was unable to stabilise anti-ISIS rule in Fallujah after retaking it.

The US government and others are pressing for the replacement of Iraqi prime minister Maliki, and it has been reported that the Iranian government is secretly willing to see him go; but finding a successor is difficult too.

When Maliki is replaced, or maybe earlier, the US is likely to send bombers to help the fight against ISIS. Socialists should not support or endorse this. With any likely replacement for Maliki, the US’s bombing will serve politically to prop up a sectarian regime unable to reunify Iraq.

Twelve years of US bombing in Afghanistan have rebuilt a political base for the Taliban, which was shattered in 2001, rather than clearing it away.

However, to make opposition to US bombing our chief slogan is wrong. Even if ISIS “fights imperialism” in the sense of clashing with the US, it is ultra-reactionary, a mortal enemy for all working-class and democratic forces.

We should campaign for a secular government in Iraq; for independence for Iraqi Kurdistan; and to defend the Iraqi labour movement from both ISIS terror and Shia-sectarian war fever on the other side.