

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



No 219 5 October 2011 30p/80p

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For a workers' government

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**SEIZE THE LOOT FROM
THE PREDATORS!**

Strike on 30 November! Fight the cuts!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to sell — and join us!

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Reinstate Edd Bauer!

By a National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) supporter

Birmingham Uni student Edd Bauer reports:

"The University of Birmingham [has] suspended my status as student, because of the Guild's [Student Union's] suspension of me as officer. I have now lost the right to be on campus, although not the right to be at the campus gates."

What had Edd done to be suspended as Vice President Education at the Guild [Student Union]?

He had spent ten days in prison without trial for his part in a banner drop at Lib Dem conference. Two other Birmingham student

activists are on bail. Edd was bailed on 27 September. He has not been tried or convicted.

But on returning to the Guild, he found that he had been suspended by its (unelected) General Manager.

Edd is also a member of the NCAFC national committee. If the Guild bureaucrats and the uni can get away with this, it will be an outrage against Birmingham University students' democratic rights. It will set a precedent that any left-wing student union officer, any campaigning student union officer, anywhere, is fair game for removal from above. As the fight against the Tories' cuts heats up, this is a major threat to student activism.

We need to fight for

Edd's reinstatement as part of the campaign to reclaim control of our student unions from unelected, non-student bureaucrats, and put control back in the hands of students and their elected representatives.

What you can do:

1. Sign the petition in defence of Edd:

petitions.com/petition/reinstateddbauer

2. Email a message of protest to the President of the Guild: president@guild.bham.ac.uk

3. Pass a motion through your student union, union branch etc supporting Edd's campaign. A model motion will appear soon.

• More: call NCAFC on 07775 763 750

REINSTATE EDD BAUER!

Demo, 1-4pm, Wednesday 12 October

Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham B15 2TU, five

minutes walk from Birmingham University station

(change at Birmingham New Street).

For more information ring 07840 136 728

bannerdropsarenotacrime.wordpress.com

Labour conference: a delegate's diary

By a Labour Party conference delegate

This year's Labour Party conference [25-29 September, in Liverpool] was, according to Campaign for Labour Party Democracy secretary Pete Willsman, the most lively in years — more support for references back, more support for speeches against the leadership line, and some political debate.

This is the second year we've had contemporary motions back on the agenda, after they were abolished by Gordon Brown in 2007 and restored in 2011.

Dave Prentis, general secretary of the public service Unison, got applause from the majority when, speaking on the Unison motion about public services and the pensions dispute, he demanded that Labour back the 30 November strike. If Labour leaders don't support the strike, he said, then his members and his union won't forgive them. He said that a line supporting the strike had been taken out of composite, and shouldn't have been.

Kingsley Abrams, from the Unite union delegation, spoke against a motion from USDAW on public service cuts which criticised those cuts only as

too far and too fast. The whole Unite delegation voted against the motion.

The unions had failed to push the (limited) democratic reform proposals in their own submission to "Refounding Labour", but they stood firm against pressure from the leadership to have their 50% of the vote at conference reduced, and reduced plans for "registered supporters" to have a say in Labour leadership elections to small proportions.

Some delegates managed to start some heckling when the headmaster of a Catholic Academy spoke about how good

Academies are. People round about them started to pay attention to what was being said, rather than just clapping every speech to be polite.

A few delegates walked out for a speech from the chair of the Police Association, and their gesture sparked good discussions. A Merseyside CLP delegate spoke up for free education after the platform had announced a new policy (devised without reference to conference) that Labour would only cut university tuition fees to £6,000. Many delegates applauded her, much to the annoyance of the officials.

People cheered Ed Miliband's speech when he said he wasn't Blair and when he kept saying how he was proud of the link with the unions. They were less keen when he went on to say Labour had been wrong to oppose Thatcher's selling-off of council houses and anti-union legislation.

There was good applause, and a good-looking show of hands, for a speech moving reference-back of the stitched-up "Refounding Labour" rule-change package. Later in the week, a constituency delegate got in to make a speech calling for the overthrow of capitalism — an idea not heard about Labour Party conference for some decades now! — and won applause.

The party officials now all seem to be Blairite ex-students. They attempt to control every aspect of the conference. They write people's speeches and pressure delegates to vote their way.

All the emergency motions submitted were ruled out of order. Every one. You would think just for appearance's sake they would let one or two through. The Unite union tried to move that the BAE job losses be discussed as an emergency motion, and was told that nothing was allowed as an emergency after the Friday before conference. The issue was then brought to conference in the "safe" form of a National Executive statement.

On one issue, the few left-wing delegates seemed to make no headway with the majority: Labour councils making cuts. Even delegates who would insist that a future Labour government make no cuts would not support Labour councils today defying cuts.

And we heard terrible politics from the platform on benefits, asylum, business, police, army, cuts.

All in, some things are moving — too few, and too little, compared to the scale of the attacks on our movement, but those in the Labour Party who want to reassert socialist ideas have a little more room to do that.

Dale Farm concessions

One of two legal cases brought against Basildon Council to stop the eviction at Dale Farm travellers site has forced some concessions.

The Council has to leave five pitches and several structures intact.

As full "clearance" can no longer go ahead, it should seriously undermine the stated intention

of council's eviction: to "return" the site to the green belt. That is a nonsense — the site was originally a scrapyard.

The outcome of another legal case chal-

lenging the entire eviction will be available before 8 October.

• dalefarm.wordpress.com

Greece: the system is bankrupt!

By Theodora Polenta

ADEDY, the Greek public sector union organisation, has started a wave of occupations from 3 October.

Occupations are taking place in the ministries of economics, culture, agriculture and development, justice, and labour, and in ten local councils.

GSEE, the private sector union organisation, is already calling for a general strike on 19 October. The leader of ADEDY has denounced the Pasok government as sacrificing public sector workers and services to the financial speculators. "Our response will be a waves of strikes-occupations and demonstrations".

The leader of GSEE said: "Our struggles will carry on as long as their policies that push all Greek working class to poverty and destitution carry on. The Pasok government is not saving our country, because our country is the Greek workers who are under attack".

648 schools and over 97 universities are occupied against the government's attacks on education. In particular, On 3 October a

massive demonstration of students on the centre of Athens blocked all roads and paralysed the traffic for hours, asking for more money to meet educational needs.

On 5 October GSEE and ADEDY have jointly called for a 24 hour strike. Transport workers, journalists, lawyers, public hospital workers, utility workers, tax collectors and others will join this strike.

The 5 October strikes, hand in hand with workers' and students' occupations, should be the start of a continuous general strike.

WORKPLACE

Every workplace should call meetings to vote on participation. Now is the time to transform these 24 hour strikes into a continuous general strike.

With Greece in crisis, and a slump in productive investments, the answer from the government and the troika is more and more extensive attacks on the working class.

Those will reduce further the tax contributions of workers, push more workers on unemployment and dependence on the benefit system, and re-

duce even further their buying power, and so push the economy even further into stagnation. The vicious circle will sucking workers' pensions and wages into the bankers' black hole.

The Greek Budget due to be voted on after the middle of October sets this rough schedule:

- Public sector spending to be reduced from 15.2 billion euros to 13.2 billion euros
- Pension spending to stay roughly the same, going from 6.5 billion to 6.6 billion euros, despite the thousands of Greek workers that will be forced into reliance on pensions within the next months.
- Tax revenues to be increased, with more direct and indirect taxes hitting Greek workers.

The "troika" (EU, European Central Bank, and IMF), Greece's Pasok

(Labour) government, and the Greek Tory Party (New Democracy) are all in virtual agreement. They disagree only on the form and distribution of the attack.

There is national and international agreement and unity between the Greek capitalist class and the international institutions.

Despite the Greek government's "good intentions", its numbers did not add up on the weekend of 2-3 October. The Greek deficit is expected to amount to 8.5% of GDP rather than the 7.6% required by the Troika (EU, European Central Bank, IMF) for more credit.

Now 30,000 workers in Greece's public sector are to be sacked. Each department will be bullied to prepare a list of 10% of workers "surplus to requirements". About 8,000 workers will be placed "on hold" and have their wage reduced to 60% of its already reduced level (around 700 to 800 euros per month).

These workers "have the right" to apply for new jobs. But the minister has announced that for every ten to fifteen workers leaving the public sector, at most one new job will be created.

A further 18,000 to 20,000 workers within two years of retirement will also be put "on hold", on 60% of their wages, awaiting their reduced pension. 3,000 to 4,000 public sector workers still working above age 65 will be sacked.

The government has the cheek to reassure public sector workers that it will make special arrangements for married couples so that only one of the two will be sacked! That is the Greek Pasok (Labour) government's definitions of workers' rights.

IDEOLOGICAL

For years now Greek governments have tried to divide Greek workers by saying that those in the public sector are privileged at the expense of private-sector workers.

The cuts build on a long-prepared ideological war against the "cumbersome" public sector and the "laziness" of its workers.

Despite government propaganda that public sector wages brought the debt crisis, and if the public sector wages are cut then private sector workers' wages and rights will be saved, the opposite is

true. The Troika has asked the Pasok government to intervene to reduce further private sector workers' nationally agreed minimum wage.

However honourable and symbolic refusal to pay the newly imposed taxes and the burning of the government papers are, they are not enough to deter the government and the Troika. Strikes and occupations have the power, and can stop them.

No worker should be fooled by the government's and media's propaganda that our strikes will lead Greece to bankruptcy. Their system and their arguments are bankrupt. Our hard earned wages and pensions go to inflate their financial bubbles that are destined to burst. They are the past. We are the future.

Our united struggle can stop to the coordinated government and Troika attacks, and push forward its own alternative proposals: to take control of the banks, the public sector, the utility companies, and big business, and to utilise the wealth that is produced for the benefit and in the interests of its producers.

Tunisia's left seeks independent profile in election

Oussama, an activist of the LGO (Workers' Left League) in Tunisia, spoke to Solidarity in September about the 23 October election for a Constituent Assembly in Tunisia. It follows the fall on 14 January this year of the old dictatorship of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

The "High Instance" [a sort of government advisory council] has declared that political publicity is forbidden — posters, TV, etc.

The law has created some ridiculous situations. The other day two activists of the PCOT [Worker-Communist Party, a group looking to the late Albanian leader Enver Hoxha] were painting "PCOT" on a wall. They were arrested. In front of the courthouse there was a poster for another political party!

The PCOT mobilised and they were released. Generally, when someone paints on a wall, they get arrested, but those who spend millions of dinars on advertising don't get arrested.

The LGO has been refused its visa to participate in the elections, and so our

candidates will stand as "independents". The LGO was said to have a political programme too similar to that of the [liberal, pro-capitalist] PDP, and so, under the categories of Ben Ali's [the old regime's] law, to be illegitimate. But we are a Marxist, Trotskyist party!

ATTAC, the campaign against Tunisia's debt, is run by a member of our Political Bureau. ATTAC was refused the right to hold a demonstration straight after the refusal of a visa for the LGO.

Everyone is saying, "wait for the Constituent Assembly". We are saying that the Assembly will not sort out all the social problems. Of course the democratic rights we have won are a real achievement — but we will have to wait and see how real and solid they turn out to be.

Mainstream political parties say that they will fight corruption. But the real problem is the whole system which, with or without democracy, reproduces the same inequalities everywhere.

There is a sort of democracy here, but there are plenty of completely unde-

mocratic practices going on.

The Islamists [the Nahda party] remind me of the practices of the Nazi party. They take over clubs. For example, the sport club in my neighbourhood has been taken over by the Islamists. If you don't agree with them, they declare you an enemy of Islam and they start hassling you.

Recently an independent leftwing lawyer, Abdel Aziz Mzoughi, was beaten up because he criticised them.

The electoral system does not allow anyone to get an absolute majority. Nahda are saying that they have the right to win a majority nevertheless.

RIGHT-WING

They are a right-wing conservative capitalist party.

They were disappointed by the visit of the Turkish prime minister because he said in a speech that secularism is the only guarantee of freedom.

As for the radical left, our perspectives for these elections are not good. Public opinion is not very political, so there is a per-

ception that the leftwing activists are troublemakers.

We have to provide an active opposition within the Assembly. We have to make sure that people mobilise for their rights. Even if we make the nicest constitution in the world on paper, we need to fight for our rights.

Insofar as there are local revolutionary committees still, there are all sorts within them. Some are controlled by counter-revolutionaries like the Islamists or ex-members of the RCD [Ben Ali's party]. A militia called Hammam-lif, which works for Nahda, runs some of these committees.

The UGTT [the main union federation] has been less visible. It is competing with new unions which have arrived on the scene — the CGTT and the UTT. Some strikes take place mainly as demonstrations of the relative strength of the different unions and a means of establishing their authority.

In recent negotiations, capitalists and the government said that they wanted to negotiate only with the UGTT.

In the elections, I think the UGTT will tend to support independent trade union candidates rather than other lists.

I find that having a plurality of trade unions, like the plurality of political parties, is only a good thing. But the leader of the UTT is known to have a very bad, pro-Ben Ali past. How can someone like that claim to be able to represent people?

DIVIDING

It risks dividing workers into several organisations, but it's important to remove the monopoly of a single union centre.

The leaders of the official union centre also have a bad past, and we should remember that it was the regional union offices, not the union centre, which led the revolution.

The 14 January Front [a left coalition formed after 14 January] has fallen apart. The Democratic Patriots and the National Labour Party have withdrawn because they want to be present on all the electoral lists. Each component party wanted to have its own independent prop-

aganda and profile.

How to recompose a working-class pole in politics? I think it will take place via the trade unions, including the new ones. But we will have to see after the elections to get an idea of where the real weight lies.

Workers are dispersed! Some are in the Islamist and liberal parties. It is difficult to speak clearly of a unified working-class politics. In order to constitute that it will be a labour of some years

The revolutionary process is ongoing. We will have to make sure that we are there, visible, defending the interests of the mass of workers and making the difference between ourselves and the other political parties clear to workers.

What complicates the picture is that most political parties take up in a vague way the "left-wing" slogans that have been raised by the left in universities for nearly ten years.

Even capitalists speak of redistribution of wealth, and Islamists speak of secularism. The language of the revolution is being debased.

Dialectics, rival to analysis?



Dave Osler

A housewife knows that a certain amount of salt flavours soup agreeably, but that added salt makes the soup unpalatable. Consequently, an illiterate peasant woman guides herself in cooking soup by the Hegelian law of the transformation of quantity into quality.

That — believe it or not — is a verbatim quote from Leon Trotsky. Leaving aside the casual sexism implicit in such an analogy, it does not strike me as a particularly impressive defence of one of major postulates of Marxist philosophy.

When I first came across the notion of dialectics, I took it on board without much further thought, simply because I wanted to be a Marxist, and dialectics were what Marxists were supposed to believe in. At that time, I had no formal training in philosophy whatsoever. If I had been asked to accept L. Ron Hubbard's dianetics instead, I'd have swallowed that, too. There's only a couple of letters' difference, after all.

The trouble is, the more I have subsequently studied formal logic, the less satisfactory it seems to be to me that Marxism hives off its own theory of knowledge, distinct from logic as the discipline is generally taught at university level, and bases everything else on the supposed insights that ensue.

I wouldn't go so far as to say I reject the conception out-

right; probably there are a number of texts that I still need to study before I come to a final conclusion on the matter. But I am increasingly uneasy about all this. If dialectics is as integral to the wider system of historical materialism as most major Marxists repeatedly stress, the whole prospectus appears to be built on methodologically weak foundations.

The general form of the dialectic, as defined by John Rees' well-regarded book *The algebra of revolution*, is said to constitute an internally contradictory totality in a constant process of change. That contradictions can and do exist, and that reality is in flux, should not be controversial, of course.

Where I start to lose the plot is the contention that because Marxists have mastered this supposedly superior form of thought, they are uniquely able — as Rees reiterates — to look beyond the surface appearance of society and come to a privileged appreciation of its underlying nature.

As is repeatedly demonstrated by the history of religion, any doctrine suggesting that only a select few can look at apparent reality and tell the rest of us what is really going on by means of a recondite master key is quite obviously open to misuse. In particular, dialectics can act as a cover for "revolution round the corner" perspectives.

For instance, the dialectician Rees argued in an article published online last year that the Coalition government in the UK only looks stable, comrades; the reality is that one final push by a united front against it would be sufficient to bring about its downfall. Funnily enough, that is not the way reality has panned out since then.

Dialectics has been used within the British Trotskyist movement to promote all kinds of arrant nonsense. I still have on my bookshelves a slim volume entitled *Studies in Dialectical Materialism*, which is the work of an author who bills himself on the cover as simply G. Healy.

"Dialectical materialists," G. Healy tells us on the first page, "get to know the world initially through a process of cognition." No shit, Sherlock. So does everyone else, pretty much by definition, I guess.

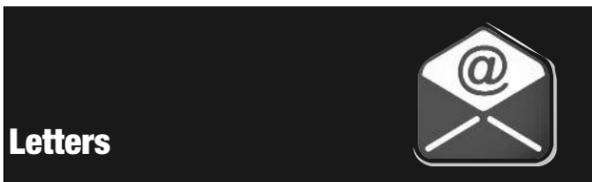
Nor do I see evidence of any distinctive superior dialectical technique in the day to day practice of today's crop of Trot groups. Dialectics remains more or less a rabbit that sect gurus can pull out of their magicians' hat when occasion demands that they have to prove that white is really black.

What is currently saving the day for me is a book first published in 1978, with which I only became acquainted a year or two back. G.A. Cohen — another author seemingly too modest to employ his first name — controversially maintains in "Karl Marx's theory of history: a defence" that "there is no such thing as a dialectical form of reasoning that can challenge analytical reasoning. Belief in dialectic as a rival to analysis thrives only in an atmosphere of unclear thought".

Commitment to analytical techniques, he suggests, is prior to commitment to this or that Marxist thesis, precisely because it is a commitment to reason itself, rather than irrational obscurantism. If historical materialism — which is the core of what is valuable in the Marxist method — can sustain itself without resort to mumbo jumbo, all Marxists have to be better off.

At the very least, Cohen's position seems a damn sight more convincing than hyping a rural granny boiling up a pot of borscht in order to feed a family of 15 with a couple of beetroots as some sort of unconscious Hegelian.

I'd love to feel that at least one group of revolutionary socialists is bold enough to think through the implications of what Cohen has to say. How about it, AWL?



Letters

Rules can help children

Although I agree with the basic argument Jayne Edwards makes (*Solidarity* 219) — that using patience, sympathy and reasoning is the best way to help a child develop self-control, self-esteem and a "moral" viewpoint — I think she misses some points and overstates her case.

1. It is my experience (which is admittedly not vast) that primary school teachers want to be rational and sympathetic with children. That is not the picture Jayne paints. But the fact that teachers cannot always be responsive to individual children's needs must be less to do with approaches to teaching and more to do with high class sizes — up to the 30 legal limit in many primary schools.

2. I think small children need something other than general guidance and "talking through" of problems.

Children's ability to reason and to understand the consequences of their actions for good or bad develops very gradually. Of course "talking things through", explaining and reasoning by adults plays a central part of that process. And to not have that approach, especially with older children, is wrong, politically wrong even.

But to expect children to be able to reason and to clearly empathise is quite another matter. Empathising is an incredibly difficult "skill". False expectations in a child's ability to do these things may cause confusion and upset.

Increasingly children are expected to abide by adult standards. In the criminal justice system there is a debate about lowering the "age of reason"; this, so that children can be prosecuted and locked up, for "criminal behaviour". The argument that children should be expected to reason is a matter of convenience for the Right because embedded is the notion that children are "naturally" immoral.

The Left should not make the same mistake.

3. Rules are good. Or rather clear and rationally framed rules and the consistent implementation of rules are good. They can "stand in" for mature moral knowledge and help guide children towards greater understanding and help them feel secure.

Potentially schools can do this sort of thing well — pre-

cisely because it is a community — and children can contrast their own behaviour with that of other children.

Of course, sensible rules about keeping the school community safe and happy can be undermined by too many rules and petty rules. But again, it is not my experience that state primary schools do have lots of petty rules. Maybe it is different in faith schools.

4. The biggest issue I have with Jayne's approach is the idea that schools can "fix" the problems children have at home. And surely it is a child's relationship with their family and the experiences they have at home that leads to self-destructive and aggressive behaviour. That schools can "fix you up" is an idea that both the left and right fall into, though obviously from radically different points of view.

The biggest problem children have "at home" is poverty and there is no quick fix for that.

It seems incontrovertible to me that there is a link between poverty and so-called bad behaviour in children. Love does not put food on the table and a child who has to eat a bag of crisps for breakfast is a child who will feel insecure and unhappy.

Teachers who respond to children's educational needs cannot substitute for a parent who is too stressed and disorganised by the harsh realities of life to respond to all of a child's emotional needs. In fact a teacher who gives a child a lot of attention may make that parent feel more powerless and unhappy about the struggles they face.

There are incremental answers and the simplest and most effective one of these is smaller class sizes. That and to make schools more genuinely rooted in the "community" (e.g., as centres for lots of varied adult education).

More consistent application of liberal teaching methods (which most teachers do adhere to) would surely follow.

Cathy Nugent, south London

Tea Party threat to healthcare

The so-called US Tea Party is indeed "chilling" (*Solidarity* 218). If the next US president is a Republican, the Tea Party will move closer to power.

Obama's modest health-care reforms will be rolled back. It will literally be "business as usual" as the health care companies boost their profits even more. Yet the US health care system was always pretty costly and less efficient than its right-wing supporters claim.

There is a warning here for the UK, I think. As Tory cuts affect the NHS, further privatisation of health care will be presented to us as inevitable and the only way to deal with longer waiting times. There are enough private health care vultures waiting to chew off profitable chunks of the NHS.

The US Tea Party movement always described itself as

grassroots. In fact, it's more accurately called "astroturf". In short, a fake grassroots revolution. It's funded by millionaires. Taki Oldham's excellent documentary "Astro Turf Wars" exposed the Tea Party very effectively. And yet many UK Tories admire the Tea Party.

In the USA and UK we need a genuine revolt of working people to save and improve health care for all. And that doesn't mean more private health care either.

Graeme Kemp

Serge's differences with Trotsky

Martyn Hudson thinks that Trotsky and Trotskyism have been unfair to Victor Serge. One of the claims he makes I haven't read enough about to judge. Did Trotskyists really accuse Serge of being an accomplice to the murder of Ignace Reiss? Or was it that they saw him as being mixed up in Dutch quasi-Trotskyist leader Henri-cus Sneevliet's mishandling of the affair?

Serge shared Sneevliet's sympathy for the Spanish POUM (the Unified Marxist Workers' Party, an anti-Stalinist, verbally revolutionary but in fact centrist formation), defending it against Trotsky's political criticisms. What does Martyn think of those criticisms? Isn't it true that, by joining the bourgeois government in Catalonia, the POUM squandered the opportunity to lead the Spanish workers to victory, and handed over the revolution to its Stalinist hangmen? Wasn't Serge's defence of the POUM (against Trotskyist criticism, not against bourgeois-Stalinist repression) a serious lapse in political judgement?

And while Serge was right to insist that, by the late 1930s, the Russian workers had lost power to a new ruling class, was he right about the roots of Stalinism in the pre-Stalin period?

Serge objected to the rise of the Cheka? But how could a revolution, plunged into civil war and encircled and invaded by a dozen imperialisms, do without special police? He accepted the repression of the Kronstadt uprising as necessary, but thought it was symptomatic of the revolution entering a blind alley? Rhetoric aside, is that really so different from Trotsky's position? None of this seems very substantial.

It is one thing to accept that the Bolsheviks made mistakes, and that these mistakes eased the way for the growth of the Stalinist counter-revolution. Such questions are an entirely proper subject for discussion among pro-October, anti-Stalinist revolutionaries. But it is another thing to erase or even blur the sharp political and social line which existed between the Bolshevik regime and the Stalinist dictatorship which replaced it.

I'm not sure that's what Martyn wants to do.

Sacha Ismail, south London

Seize the loot from the predators!

“Occupy Wall Street” protestor

“Companies are sitting on huge cash reserves”, reports a writer in the *Financial Times* (3 October). “In the US, for example, companies had \$1,200bn (€880bn) stashed away in cash and short-term liquid investments at the end of last year”.

The banks, bailed out by governments in 2008, are sitting on even huger cash piles. Central banks anxiously stuff more and more cash into the commercial banks, hoping that this will ease up credit and stop a new sharp economic downturn.

And yet global capitalism is on the brink of a new crash, and set for a long period of economic depression and high unemployment even if the new crash is avoided.

On 3 October, the Greek government announced it would not meet its targets for cutting its budget deficit. Euro-leaders and the IMF will now decide whether Greece gets its next chunk of “bail-out” funds.

They will push the Greek government to agree even sharper cuts as a condition. On 2 October the Government said it would slash another 30,000 public service jobs in just the next two months.

The “bail-out” funds do not go to the Greek people. They go via the Greek government to banks which have lent the Greek government money and demand it back with interest.

The aim is as much to enable those banks to get their money back — and so arrange that if or when Greece finally does say it just can’t pay its debts, the cost is carried by European public institutions, ultimately by taxpayers, rather than by banks.

At the same time, a movement like Spain’s “real democracy” and Greece’s “indignant citizens” has burgeoned in the USA.

“Occupy Wall Street” has been demonstrating in Zuccotti Park, near the global financial epicentre of Wall Street, in New York, since 17 September.

The movement demands “democracy, not corporatocracy”, and says: “We are the 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%. We are using the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic to achieve our ends...”

In Britain as in Greece and in the USA, services and jobs are being cut, wages are being kept down, and speed-up is being enforced at work, in order to keep feeding banks and big business with cash while keeping governments credit-

worthy on the global financial markets.

To use the word thrown out by Ed Miliband in his Labour Party conference speech (27 September), the lives of millions are being cramped and ruined to feed the greed of economic “predators”.

The labour movement should mobilise against the predators.

The first step is to join strike movements like the 30 November strike against pension cuts, and demand they be extended into campaigns of rolling and selective action with the power and urgency needed to win.

The second step is to demand taxes on the rich. While Greek workers and pensioners suffer, rich Greeks have €600 billion in Swiss banks — more than enough to settle Greece’s debt repayments without trouble.

In Britain, while benefits, services and jobs are being slashed by cuts of £18 billion from benefits and £16 billion from education and other local services, over five years, just one thousand of the wealthiest people in the country hold a total of £400 billion, according to the *Sunday Times* Rich List.

Taxation alone would leave the ultra-rich, the predators, with the economic power that they so abuse.

The third step is to seize the wealth from them, and redirect it, under democratic control, to goals of social provision, improving services and jobs, and bringing social equality — rather than to profit, greed and exploitation.

Expropriate the banks. Take them into public ownership, and don’t leave them to be run by the same bankers with the same profit priorities, as in 2007-8, but establish democratic and workers’ control.

Expropriate the big corporations sitting on their cash piles, and redirect production, under workers’ control, to social aims.

The labour movement, currently fed only bland slogans like “close tax loopholes” and “a Robin Hood tax”, should demand a real debate on economic policies. We should set the aim not of a Lib-Lab coalition after Cameron has done his five years, and not of a Labour government which goes on from where Cameron left off, just softening it slightly, but of a workers’ government.

In other words, a government based on the labour movement, accountable to it, and pursuing the interests of the working class as Thatcher, Blair, Brown and Cameron have pursued the interests of the predators.



Is this as good as it gets? Women’s lot under capitalism

THE CASE FOR CLASS-STRUGGLE FEMINISM

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“Only the beginning of the revolution”

In July the Egyptian feminist and novelist Nawal El Saadawi visited London and spoke to *Solidarity*.

What opportunities have opened up for women as a result of the democracy movement; what are the problems?

The problems of the revolution in Egypt and the problems of women are connected...

US/UK/Israel don't want the revolution. They want the outcome of the revolution to be pragmatic capitalist. They want the free market.

The revolution may be hijacked by outside powers. The battle is going on. But the most important power is the power of the masses. Who removed Mubarak? The power of the masses. We want to keep this power on.

When we were in Tahrir Square and the military established a committee to change the constitution there was not a single woman on it. After that, we re-started the Egyptian Women's Union (EWU). We tried to do it several times [prior to this year]. Suzanne Mubarak banned it. Many of the women's NGOs in Egypt are pro-Mubarak.

The Arab Women's Solidarity Association and the Egyptian Women's Union however were banned, because we were against patriarchy and all oppression.

But the NGOs [backed by the Mubarak regime] are funded by the US and the EU: five women can start a NGO. They fragmented the feminist movement. The women's movement was suppressed by Suzanne Mubarak and the ministers around her. We couldn't have a NGO without the permission of government.

We started the EWU again from Tahrir Square.

The [Parliamentary] elections are now pushed back to October/November. Is this a good thing?

It gives more time for all parties to organise — including pro-Mubarak forces.

We were calling for a broad committee to change the constitution. There must be a broad committee, with representation from women/men, Muslim/Christian, etc.

This committee of about 100-200 people to make a new constitution should be secular; we also need to change the family code.

But the army and Muslim Brotherhood want elections before constitutional change. They don't want to give us time to organise for a new constitution.

I am still censored by the media after the revolution; it's ridiculous. I can't talk to the television, the media... what's that about? We are the people who paved the way for the revolution for decades.

We are only at the beginning of the revolution. We can't change everything at once.

Were you present during the International Women's Day events this year?

Yes, while we were in Tahrir Square, some young men had the idea for an International Women's Day demonstration. We went back to my home (which is nearby). We started to form slogans and organise. Our slogans were quite benign: equality; we need to change the family code, etc.

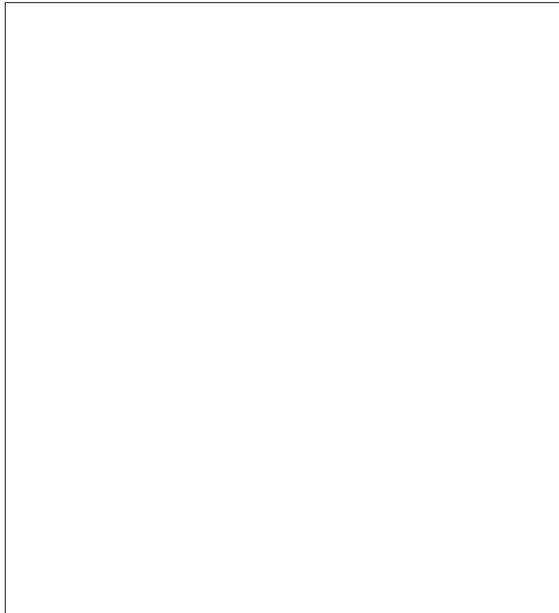
The march went very well. There were thousands. (We had said it would be a Million Women March but, still, it was good.) Many finished the march and went home. But in the afternoon gangs of Mubarak supporters and gangs of police came and beat the men and harassed the women.

This was by order of the government and the military. After Mubarak left, the police opened the prisons to let people out. We organised committees to protect our streets against these gangs.

They put some of the women and men in prison after the IWD march. They said they will check the women's virginity!

We started to discuss the links between the Mubarak/high military and the gangs. People started to criticise the High Council after that.

Are many men aware of women's rights issues? Are



Nawal El Saadawi

women becoming more involved in politics?

I have written 47 books. Many of the young people have come to my home; even young members of the Muslim Brotherhood. They tell me we might differ on some things but we agree with you on many things.

I have a lot of support. But the government don't want to acknowledge that. When I appear in Tahrir Square everybody comes to me. Even veiled women come to me. There *is* change.

My slogan is “unveiling of the mind”. You can't have a revolution without unveiling of the mind. Even veiled women — their mind has changed.

The veil of the mind is more dangerous than the veil of the face.

The veil becomes a habit, like make-up. They are used to the veil. But when the mind is unveiled, that makes a change.

Can we talk more about young women... in Egypt and elsewhere...

Among young women there is a concentration on rape, but rape is a product of patriarchy.

I was the first one in Egypt to condemn Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a doctor. I lost my job.

Suzanne Mubarak, etc, they encouraged NGOs to fight FGM without mentioning social/economic mutilation. So that people won't challenge that, they just fight against cutting girls.

I was censored by the *New York Times* because I linked sexual rape to capitalism and colonialism.

Sexual rape is not separate from war. From capitalism. The invasion of Iraq. They said the US was going to Iraq to save women.

They have no economic or social analysis of the position of women.

What's the most important thing to do in Egypt now?

The most important thing now is to have a secular constitution. One that says all Egyptians, women/men, Christian/Muslim, poor/rich, are equal.

Our constitution is very backward. It creates conflict between Islam and Christianity. State/money/land have no religion.

We need to have more or less free elections (as far as possible under capitalist society). To work toward real democracy and freedom, against free market democracy, which is false democracy.

The family code also is horrible and must be changed.

FURTHER READING

- Statement of the Egyptian Women's Union (EWU) Cairo 1st March 2011: <http://alturl.com/tc9td>
- Nawal El Saadawi page, Zed Books: <http://alturl.com/v33p6>

The w

By Clive Bradley

Until the beginning of 2011, North Africa and the Middle East had been dominated by authoritarian regimes and dictatorships for decades. Popular opposition, too, had been muted. The so-called “Arab Spring” — now Autumn — reveals that profound social and political changes had been taking place “beneath the surface”.

Common to most of the uprisings has been on the one hand, growing resentment — especially among youth — of the repressive regimes, and on the other frustration at general social inequality and in particular the closing down of opportunities for, eg, university graduates. The incident which detonated the protests — the self-immolation of an unemployed university graduate in Tunisia — typifies this dynamic.

As such, middle class youth were central to the uprisings, first in Tunisia, then Egypt, then elsewhere — often mobilising via social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. But some of these movements had their roots in earlier, smaller protests over recent years.

A significant example would be the April 6 Movement in Egypt (which first began as a Facebook group in 2008) — which is named after a planned day of workers' strikes in the important Egyptian textile-producing town of Mehalla al-Kubra — where there had been militant struggles over previous years. The Facebook group was an attempt to launch a general strike in solidarity with this working-class struggle. In the event, the strike was prevented by the army, and the general strike never took place (the youth organising the Facebook group had no working-class roots to make such a thing possible).

But its name alone indicates, at least symbolically, the deep connections between the January protests in Egypt and the recent history of working-class struggle against the regime.

The removal of Hosni Mubarak by the Egyptian army was also especially in response to an unfolding general strike which had, in particular, spread to the economically vital Suez Canal.

EGYPT

From a socialist point of view, the emergence of a new, independent workers' movement in Egypt is the most important feature of the year's upheavals.

This is a region in which independent workers' organisations have been very thin on the ground. The emergence of the working class as a major actor in events, and beginning to develop its own movement, is something of “world historic” significance.

As yet, in all these countries, working-class based or socialist political movements remain weak and marginal. They have this in common, of course, with the rest of the world. Many of these countries have had governments which have called themselves socialist (Libya, Syria, Algeria); even those which long ago abandoned their version of “state socialism” (Egypt) sustain an image of socialism which is very tarnished in the eyes of the population. Much of the “old left”, emerging from this tradition, is imbued with Stalinoid and left nationalist sensibilities. But there is every reason to be confident that new opportunities will open up for a revived revolutionary socialism.

In Tunisia, too, the youth-led uprising was linked to a developing class struggle. The trade union federation (which unlike in Egypt was a real trade union movement) has, from the beginning, played a central role in the revolution of 2011.

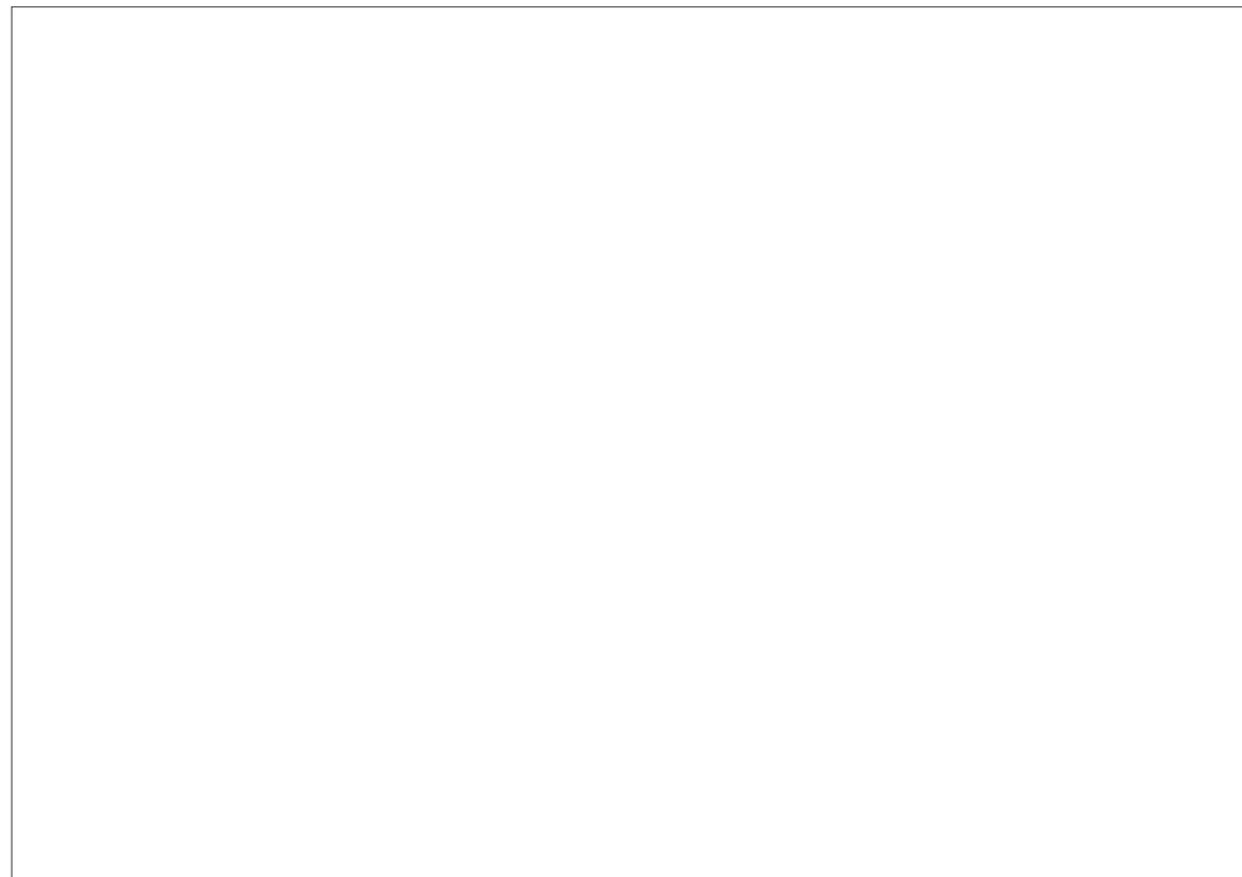
The revolts in Tunisia and Egypt gave encouragement and inspiration to similar movements across the Arab world — from Morocco to Bahrain, from Syria to Yemen.

The traditional Islamist movements — an-Nahda in Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt — were slow to respond to events.

Since the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt, these movements have been anxious to reassure Western governments that they have no radical plans for their countries, and do not seek to dominate the new polities which are emerging (for example, the Brotherhood says it will not contend more than 50 per cent of seats in the parliamentary elections now due in November, or stand for president).

The threat to workers' organisations and democracy posed by these movements should not be underestimated. In Egypt the Brotherhood boycotted the (flagrantly rigged) last parlia-

orkers emerge



Busworkers are among many groups of workers currently taking industrial action in Egypt

mentary elections. Before that, in conditions of semi (at best) legality, they held 88 seats (20%) of the total. It is still likely that in the new parliament they will be the largest single party, and for sure are the best organised (better organised than the various liberal bourgeois parties, and much better than the tiny socialist groups).

There are signs of crisis in the Brotherhood, resulting in splits (including one split which resulted from the expulsion of 4,000 or so youth who had been influenced, it seems, by the secular left during protests against Israel's war in Gaza). But as and if the Brotherhood gains in confidence, or feels under pressure from an apparently substantial "salafist" (conservative Islamic) constituency — and violent (or previously violent) "jihadists" who are back in circula-

tion after years in prison — it could assert its conservative, and undemocratic nature more clearly.

The development of a working class political movement — some kind of workers' or Labour party — linked to the new independent unions is an urgent political task for Egyptian militants, both to consolidate the gains so far of the workers in the uprisings, and to contest the Muslim Brotherhood, or other right-wing religious movements, in the future. There is already a Democratic Workers Party, which is an excellent development.

The most far-reaching of the uprisings so far has been in Libya. Of course it is unusual in that its ultimate success was dependent on military intervention by NATO.

NATO intervention for sure prevented Qaddafi invading

the rebel stronghold of Benghazi in March 2011, where he would have crushed the revolution, probably via a bloody massacre. Representatives of the "rebel" government, the National Transitional Council, lobbied the west to intervene.

Successful campaigning by the Western left to prevent NATO intervention would have flown in the face of the express wishes of the revolutionary movement itself, and resulted in a massacre in Benghazi which would have been a tragedy in itself but also an enormous defeat for the "Arab Spring" as a whole.

Workers' Liberty didn't oppose the intervention. We stressed that NATO could be given no overall political trust; but also that general opposition to NATO could not, in this specific instance, override more immediate political concerns.

NATO intervention in Libya has been of a different character to the 2003 war in Iraq or the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. It was unlikely to result in the occupation of Libya. It was a relatively limited action with limited goals.

The leadership of the NTC consists mainly of men from the Qaddafi regime who "jumped ship", and many who advocate a neo-liberal and pro-western economic policy. But the rebel movement as such is primarily a "raw" revolt of the Libyan people — who, as a result of extreme repression, have very few traditions of political organisation or debate. It remains, as far as can be judged, politically inchoate. For sure now different tendencies will fight for control. Among them are Islamist currents; but again these seem weaker than might have been expected.

LIBYA

Events in Libya therefore constitute a revolution — so far, a political revolution which has removed the old regime; but also a revolution in the sense of a genuine mass uprising of the oppressed, deserving the support of socialists.

For sure, the possibilities for working class and socialist organisation in Libya now, and in the immediate future, are immensely greater than they were under Qaddafi. Those on the left who suggest (implicitly or explicitly) that the revolutionary movement is "reactionary" and should not be supported are utterly wrong.

Of course Western powers now seek to influence — even shape — whatever new government arises in Tripoli. But this isn't true only of Libya.

Indeed, the general pattern is that the previous, pro-western regimes remain in power, and even after elections, the new governments are likely to be pro-western (which would be no less true of a Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt). The outcome of events in Syria remains uncertain, and western governments are moving further in the direction of punitive — though not military — action against the extremely violent regime. But nowhere has there been a movement which has represented a serious challenge to Western hegemony.

That is not the significance of the "Arab Spring": their significance is the emergence of new movements, and in particular the workers' movement in Egypt.

An alternative to a pro-western economic policy is only beginning to emerge. In the past, the alternative — which was adopted by the regimes in Egypt and Syria (and in slightly different forms in Libya, Algeria, the former South Yemen, and Iraq) — was the model of the USSR (albeit in a rather diluted form). A thoroughgoing alternative to the neo-liberal policies which have shaped the region in recent decades — with wholesale privatisation, etc — requires more than just opposition to "the west", or western capitalism.

But challenges to neo-liberalism are already taking shape. In Egypt, at least one company that had been sold off to profiteers has been renationalised thanks to demands from below.

No doubt at present the sentiment behind such demands remains in a vaguely nationalist or Stalinoid framework; but it represents, also, a vital break with the recent past, and a foundation upon which a socialist economic policy can be forged — and with it a genuine, democratic, mass socialist movement.

Strikes grow in Egypt

Despite attempts by Egypt's military government to impose emergency laws, and despite its moves to extend its interim rule well into 2012, strikers in Egypt are becoming more assertive.

A common theme, according to the Cairo paper *Al-Ahram*, is the demand that "Prime Minister Essam Sharaf honour his months-old promise to raise the minimum wage for all government employees to 700 Egyptian pounds" [£76] per month.

Not only the lowest-paid, but also groups like doctors and teachers, are below that.

As of Monday 3 October, bus drivers in Cairo, who have been in dispute since 17 September, were talking of running the buses for free, without collecting fares, as a new stage in their struggle.

They have demonstrated on the streets, and some have gone on hunger strike. On 27 September their union (apparently one of the new independent unions, not one of the old state-run unions) announced a deal, but the drivers continued striking.

As well as wage rises, they demand an upgrade of the bus fleet, which they say is old and dangerous.

On Monday 3 October, also, professors and students at

six universities demonstrated to demand the replacement of university administrators inherited from the Mubarak regime.

At Ain Shams, Alexandria, Assiut and other universities, professors have struck.

Egypt's 1.5 million school teachers began a strike movement on 17 September, demanding wage rises, the making permanent of tens of thousands of teachers on temporary contracts, and the sacking of the minister of education.

Some of them joined Cairo transport workers in a city-centre protest. As of late September, a significant minority of school teachers were still on strike.

Doctors in public health services struck and organised rallies and marches in September. As well as wage rises, they demand an increase in the public health care budget from three per cent of government spending to 15%. (In Britain in 2009-10, the Department of Health took 17% of government spending.)

In addition, *Al-Ahram* reports that 4,000 workers at Ain Sokhna, Egypt's only privately-owned seaport, struck from 21 September against the owner, DP World, and after four days won "a near-complete victory".

Predators? Demand Labour and unions fight them!

By Martin Thomas

Myself, when I first read Ed Miliband's Labour Party conference speech (27 September), I dismissed his attack on "predators" as an unmemorable empty throw-away remark.

I was wrong. If it was throwaway, then it was thrown away onto a terrain where it has been a stifling consensus in mainstream politics for decades to be "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich" (Peter Mandelson, 1998), and yet where now, with the crisis, millions can see that the drive for filthy riches has made society ever more cruel to the majority and economic life ever more destructive.

The "predators" line has reverberated in the media, and provides leverage for the theme which *Solidarity* and Workers' Liberty have hammered at for the last year and a half: Make Labour fight!

A sharp and unexpected assessment came from Peter Osborne in the *Daily Telegraph* (30/09/11).

The "Thatcher settlement, like Attlee's, proved enduring. Indeed, it was formalised after the general election of 1997, when the victorious Labour prime minister Tony Blair (supported by his chancellor Gordon Brown) explicitly accepted and developed the economic and moral insights of his great predecessor.

The financial collapse of September 2008 drew a line under this period of our history. From that moment, British politics entered uncharted territory, just as it did after the financial disasters of the Seventies...

Hence the importance of Ed Miliband's party conference address in Liverpool on Tuesday... Miliband... made a tentative step towards tearing up the rules that have defined British economics for the past generation with his cautious critique of capitalism as it has been carried on here for the past 30 years".

Osborne is a maverick right-winger, described somewhere as "a former Marxist turned Christian country gent", anti-free-marketeer and deliberately spiky in his writing.

Miliband's critique was "tentative" and "cautious" indeed. His speech included no proposal for action against "predators" other than a continuation of the tax on bankers'

bonuses. He retrospectively endorsed some of Thatcher's measures in the 1980s.

However, the "ungenerous press" for Miliband's speech has, in its own way, contributed to shifting the terms of mainstream political debate, bigging up Miliband's anti-"predator" theme as more than he'd bargained for.

Digby Jones, former CBI chief and a government minister under Gordon Brown, described Miliband's speech as a "kick in the teeth for the only sector that generates wealth, that pays the tax and creates the jobs this country needs."

The *Sun* reported the speech this way: "'Red' Ed Miliband will vow today to take on big business as he declares the modern capitalist system 'a failure'."

It responded to Ed Miliband's much-applauded line, "I'm not Tony Blair", with the pithy sneer: "Ed Miliband on the only Labour leader ever to win three elections in a row".

CBI leader John Cridland told the *Sun*: "Business people will be scratching their heads and asking why Mr Miliband thinks large numbers of British firms are asset strippers".

DESPOIL

The Express: "Ed Miliband was condemned by business leaders yesterday over his plans to hit 'predator' businesses with higher taxes".

Benedict Brogan, in the *Telegraph*: Miliband's "is a model for crushing enterprise in favour of expanding the state".

Miliband counterposed capitalist "predators" (bad) to capitalist "producers" (good). In modern capitalism the production is almost a sideline to the predation. Over a hundred years ago Frederick Engels wrote: "The capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends, tearing off coupons, and gambling on the Stock Exchange, where the different capitalists despoil one another of their capital". Top managers are part of the capitalist class; but production managers are the least well-paid and lowest-ranking subgroup of managers.

Right-wing writers like Simon Heffer in the *Daily Mail* cited the truth that in capitalism it is impossible to draw a

neat line between production and predation. They used it to gloss up the producing capitalists as "wealth-creators" (in fact, the workers they employ create the wealth) and to excuse predation as a necessary minor sideline: "Miliband contrasted wealth creators with asset-strippers, ignoring the unfortunate truth that some people are both, and that the former depends on the latter".

Alastair Darling, the last Labour Chancellor, was quoted in the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun* as backing the outcry: "If I build in a city centre am I good for investing or bad for speculating? Businesses are there to make money".

On the other side of it, writers like Seumas Milne in the *Guardian* were enthusiastic about what they called "the most radical speech by a Labour leader for a generation".

Whether or not the labour movement, in politics, should seek only damage-limitation under the rule of the market and profit-making, or whether it should move against at least some strands of profiteering, is now an issue in mainstream politics. Socialists should apply leverage to that crack in the consensus. It may close again, but, so far as our efforts can make a difference, we should strive to open it wider.

At one time it was fairly routine for leaders of Labour and similar parties vaguely to condemn profiteers. "Gnomes of Zurich": Harold Wilson, 1956. "Squeeze rich until the pips squeak": Denis Healey, 1978. At another time, during and for a while after the early 20th century era of repeated spasmodic crisis, when even conservatives often said that capitalism might well not survive long, Labour leaders would sometimes make vague speeches about replacing capitalism with socialism.

Since the 1990s attitudes like Darling's or Mandelson's have dominated. The bit in Miliband's speech was a shift, not a repeat of something which has been standard.

2011 is not 1980, or 1973, or the 1930s, or 1918. It is not just that Ed Miliband is feeble. At the last general election, May 2010, the biggest slate of activist-left candidates (though it was a small one: TUSC) mostly limited its agitation to "stop the cuts" and "troops out of Afghanistan", with scarcely a word about capitalism and socialism.

CRACKS

The last 30 years of capitalist storming and then triumphalism have created a great cultural deadweight in politics.

Even young, militant, street-activist movements tend to present themselves as only "indignant citizens", or advocates of "real democracy", or "democracy not corporatocracy", or "another world" (undefined).

Active socialists must both advocate our ideas boldly, without being flattened by the deadweight, and seek leverage for those ideas in the cracks of a culture which has been flattened by the deadweight.

In history there are periods when decades of ideological evolution are condensed into months or weeks. Most of the time, though, decades take decades. Even the periods of rapid tumult are based on previous slow evolutions.

Activists who came into political life in the early 1980s — as many of today's labour-movement stalwarts did — will have a bias towards dismissing developments as not to be compared with that time. But the early 1980s will never be repeated. New events are what they are, not failed attempts to replicate past eras.

From the past, one of the most relevant experiences to learn from now is the advice that Engels gave to socialists in the USA in the 1880s. They were a small band, mostly German migrants who had been educated in socialist theory back in Germany, operating in a USA where even the most militant workers usually accepted free-market economics.

Agitation developed around the ideas of a quack writer, Henry George, who argued that all social ills could be cured by taxing land.

Marx considered George "utterly backward! He understands nothing about the nature of surplus value". In theoretical terms, his ideas were "a last attempt — to save the capitalistic regime".

Yet George's book and the "sensation" it had stirred up were "significant because [they were] a first, if unsuccessful, attempt at emancipation from the orthodox political economy". Engels argued that the socialists should explain George's inadequacies, but not use that as an excuse to stand aside. Rather, they should use the "sensation" to gain maximum leverage for agitation and for pushing along the movement.

Physical threats and slanders: how the SWP treats other socialists

Left

By Ira Berkovic



Young AWL members experienced first-hand some of the worst of the SWP's political culture on the TUC demonstration in Manchester on 2 October.

An SWPer threatened to attack two AWLers (one male and one female) for being "Zionist racists".

The SWP comrade, herself a young woman, had taken umbrage at the presence on an AWL stall of our pamphlet *Two Nations, Two States: Socialists and Israel/Palestine* and made several visits to the stall, each time with more fellow SWPers to back her up.

One "exchange" ended with her being dragged off by her friends after she had grabbed an AWLer by the shirt and screamed "I am going to punch you in the face, you racist idiot".

It is perverse that the SWP, who like to see themselves as the left's foremost champions of Palestinian rights, take

such a hysterical attitude to the idea of a two-states settlement, when opinion polls have consistently shown that a majority of Palestinians themselves favour such a move.

Recent articles in *Socialist Worker* have sneered at the Palestinians' moves to rattle the prison-bars of Israeli occupation by attempting to declare independence through the UN; the SWP insists that liberation for Palestine must be "through Cairo" (this is rarely spelled out, but implies an external conquest of Israel by a sufficiently belligerent Egyptian government).

The SWP's vitriolic opposition to the idea of two states means that, in practice, they would prefer that the Palestinians continue to suffer under Israeli occupation while they wait for "Cairo" to free them, rather than make any immediate attempt to break the deadlock by fighting for independence within a two-states framework.

When the culture of the British left's biggest organisation trains its young cadres to believe that physical threats and slander are good ways of engaging in debate with other socialists, something is very wrong.

With our class facing such significant attacks, challenging that poisonous, Stalinist culture and replacing it with one of democratic debate is more essential than ever.

The markets strangle Greece

By Colin Foster

In capitalist booms, credit is easy. No-one wants to hold onto cash. The wealthy plough their cash into business, or lend it out on easy terms.

In slump or depression, the opposite happens. Everyone is nervous about lending or agreeing to deferred payments. Businesses want hard cash.

This cycle is working itself through in a new capitalist world where there is no hard cash, only different forms of soft cash. Hence the way that crisis-management methods are constantly unable to find firm ground.

Marx started *Capital* volume 1 with the statement: "The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities..." Marx knew that was partial and incomplete, and indeed the statement can well be read as sarcastic [1]: in capitalist societies they think that all this stuff for sale is real wealth!

In any case, if read literally it is way out of date. The total wealth of households in Britain — just households, let alone wealth owned by banks and businesses — was about £9,000 billion at the last official count. The total stock of durable physical wealth — houses, business buildings, machinery, etc. — owned by households, businesses, and government combined was much less: about £3,000 billion.

Most wealth in today's capitalist societies presents itself as an immense accumulation of bits of paper. Those bits of paper are various forms of ticket to portions of future production, or specifically to portions of future surplus-value.

Since the money issued by governments became unlinked from gold and silver, it too is essentially a sort of ticket. A pound coin is a ticket or token for an aliquot part of the future labour-time of capitalist production in Britain. A dollar bill is a ticket or token for an aliquot part of the future labour-time of capitalist production in the USA.

US DOLLAR

These are "surer" tickets, directly and immediately exchangeable for actual goods and services unless the issuing government is in collapse, but tokens for commodities rather than commodities themselves.

Long ago Marx wrote that "the entire history of modern industry shows that metal [i.e. precious metal, gold and silver coins, etc.] would be required only to settle international trade... if production at home were organised... [In fact] even now no metal money is needed at home".

For decades, the US dollar, not gold, has been the world money. The labour-time of capitalist production in the USA is sufficiently reliable, and sufficiently rich and varied in its produce, that tokens for it are accepted as the world standard for labour-time as represented by goods and services.

After the Iraq debacle and the 2008 crash, and with the rapid technological growth of centres like China, the USA's economic hegemony has declined. On 6 August a ratings agency officially rated US Treasury Bonds (not dollar bills, but the next surest thing: IOUs from the US Federal Reserve Bank) as no longer triple-A (rock-solid).

Yet financiers are still buying Treasury bonds. Avidly. Whatever the ratings agencies say, they think that those tickets to dollars plus a guaranteed rate of interest are about as hard and solid a stash of wealth as they can find.

The recent fashion among some financiers for buying gold instead has been knocked by a sudden 15% drop in its relative value.

FINANCIAL MARKET

A *Financial Times* columnist recently stressed the point [2]:

"A generation or two ago, 'money' was something that most people visualised, if not experienced, in tangible form: coins in a jar, cheques in the post, notes in a wallet..."

"[Now it is like] an object in a room of mirrors, that keeps refracting into numerous new forms, so dizzying that our brains are simply not equipped to understand.

"[This] makes it surprisingly hard even for financiers — let alone anyone else — to keep track of where those zeros are going, or if anything tangible lies behind them".

As Dick Bryan put it recently in *Solidarity* [3]: "The music never stops. Financiers will never get out of the market.



Greek police disperse protest (the banner reads "strike till victory")

They have got to keep playing and trying to beat the market, because there is nowhere safe to hide...

"[Thus] the ongoing massive growth of more and more sorts of financial products, more and more ways of holding wealth in a liquid (tradable) form. If financial market trading is everything, more and more diversity of things to trade will become the order of the day..."

The fluidity of the markets brings more rigidity from the governments. Governments, more and more, aim economically at establishing their countries as good sites for quick-moving global capital, not as relatively-autonomous, relatively-integrated economic complexes.

Keeping their currency as a valid, tradable token in global markets, and retaining their own creditworthiness as borrowers on those markets, are their first principles.

Thus the strange rush by governments, only a brief time after the big "Keynesian moment" of 2008, to write balanced-budget laws into their constitutions. Thus the fact that Hungary and Latvia, which have suffered the worst slumps in Europe — worse than Greece — did not use their financial autonomy to let their currencies slip in value against the euro, but made their populations absorb all the pressure.

PFI

The world has become like a giant complex of PFI schemes. The future income from everything has already been sold to some financier, avid for a good profit.

He may already have sold the "ticket" to that future income on to someone else. It is now part of a dizzying multiple-refraction of financial operations.

Capital presses to secure the future income, by as much pressure as it takes on forcing down wages, speeding up work, and cutting social overheads, to keep the whirligig going round.

Despite the huge discrediting of neo-liberalism in the 2008 crash, governments have become more, not less, aggressively neo-liberal in the years since then.

Greece's budget problems are tiny relative to the European Union economy, in real terms [4]. A modest transfer from richer EU countries, or an agreement by central EU institutions (not just an ad hoc European Financial Stability Fund) to open lines of credit for Greece, would remove the pressure for the destructive cuts.

So, of course, would a seizure of the 600 billion euros held in Swiss banks by wealthy Greeks.

But the neo-liberal political pressure, and nationalist kickbacks in many EU countries, are making both options unworkable. So Greece staggers from crisis to crisis, the only certainty being that the working people of Greece pay the cost.

[1] bit.ly/pepperell

[2] on.ft.com/14trill

[3] bit.ly/dickbryan

[4] bit.ly/gkapple

Léonce Aguirre

By Martin Thomas

Léonce Aguirre, a leader of the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, and before that of the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League), died suddenly from meningitis on 29 September.

He was 60, and had been an active Trotskyist since youth, first in his native Switzerland, then from 1976 in France.

He was a ready polemicist, and in the late 1990s, when I knew him best, leader of an opposition group in the LCR called the "Révolution tendency".

I first met him during France's great strike wave of late 1995. A contingent of AWL members had gone to a demonstration in Paris, and sought to help out by selling the LCR's paper and distributing its leaflets.

Wanting to engage politically, I went to the LCR headquarters to hand in the sales money. Aguirre had what is usually the least-sought-after job in a revolutionary socialist organisation: treasurer. I found him in a tiny office, tucked away in the LCR's large building and piled high with bills and records.

He was keen not only to take the cash, but to talk politically. His grouping sought to push the LCR into clearer self-assertion as a revolutionary working-class political force, and out of the miasma into which it had fallen since the late 1980s, in which its political orientation was focused on endless and fruitless attempts at "broad regroupments" with fragments around the French Socialist Party and Communist Party.

DISCUSS

The factional battle in the LCR focused on immediate issues of French politics, often electoral politics. But Aguirre was also keen to discuss broader political questions, and expressed ideas close to the AWL's on Stalinism.

His group worked closely for a while with Voix des Travailleurs (a group excluded from Lutte Ouvrière in 1997, and which joined the LCR in 2000) and with L'Étincelle (a dissident internal grouping in Lutte Ouvrière from the early 90s: eventually, after a long "cold split", excluded from LO in 2008, and now in the NPA). From 1999 to 2001, it published a joint magazine with L'Étincelle (*Convergences Révolutionnaires*).

On an organisational level, Aguirre's group won its battle. The LCR turned away from obsessive haggling with small coteries of ex-SP or ex-CP people, and did well by running its own candidate in the 2002 presidential election.

Basic self-assertion is fundamental for a revolutionary socialist organisation. It has to be coupled with an incisive yet patient orientation to developing and transforming the existing (non-revolutionary) labour movement. On that, we had less in common with Aguirre's group of the late 1990s.

Over the last decade, Aguirre was politically reintegrated into the LCR/NPA majority, and on some issues was on what in the 1990s he would probably have thought to be the "right" of the majority. He remained active, thoughtful, open-minded.

Some of his personal qualities are conveyed by the testimonies to him from his factional opponents. The group round Christian Picquet who were Aguirre's sharpest opponents inside the LCR in the late 90s, and in 2009 split from the NPA, write: "Great was his honesty, and scrupulous his sensitivity on questions of democracy".

Members of Lutte Ouvrière, with whom he had many political clashes, write simply: "He was a nice guy".

Trotsky and permanent revolution

Paul Hampton reviews Richard Day and Daniel Gaido, *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution*, (Haymarket 2011)

“Permanent revolution” was one of Leon Trotsky’s outstanding contributions to Marxism. In many respects, to be a Trotskyist is to accept the basic tenets of permanent revolution.

In Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, Trotsky found the empirical grounds for uneven and combined development, which enabled him to grasp the dynamics of the Russian revolution and therefore to draw out the full political conclusions from the analysis.

Trotsky’s key arguments were that the Russian proletariat would be hegemonic due to its strategic position and class conscious Marxist leadership. The working class would overthrow absolutism using its own methods (such as political mass strikes) and create its own organisations (such as unions and Soviets). This meant the working class socialists would form a majority Social-Democratic [in the terminology of that time: Marxist] workers’ government and set about implementing a democratic programme, such as land reform, national self-determination and institute a republic.

However, this socialist workers’ government would also have to implement working class demands, such as unemployment relief, the eight hour day, etc, because of its social base. As such the workers’ government would be compelled by the logic of the class struggle to go further and alter the social relations — effectively the working class would begin to break the capitalist relations of production and make a socialist revolution.

This revolution would detonate European workers’ struggles, which would prevent the Russian workers state from being strangled.

The publication of Richard Day and Daniel Gaido’s book *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution* allows the English reader to read some of Trotsky’s first formulations of permanent revolution from 1905. The translations in this book indicate the brilliance of Trotsky’s synthesis forged in the heat of a revolution and add to our appreciation of his Marxism.

1905

The first article, ‘Up to the Ninth of January’, written before the massacre, concluded that tsarism would be overthrown by a general strike. In ‘After the Petersburg Uprising: What Next?’ (20 January 1905), Trotsky reiterated his argument that the principal actor was the proletariat.

In his ‘Introduction to Ferdinand Lassalle’s Speech to the Jury’ (July 1905), Trotsky argued for a workers’ government that would be compelled to take socialist means and make a socialist revolution. In ‘Social Democracy and Revolution’ (25 November 1905), Trotsky uses the term “permanent revolution”, or at least its semantic equivalent “uninterrupted revolution” for the first time.

In ‘Foreword to Karl Marx on the Paris Commune’ (December 1905), Trotsky spoke of “a revolution in Permanenz”. He called on the Russian working class to take power, leading the poor peasants. In these texts, it is possible to see how the basic postulates of permanent revolution emerged in Trotsky’s thought.

During his imprisonment in 1906, Trotsky was able to take the daring sweep, and brilliance of these ideas, together with his direct, concrete experience of leading the revolution, to produce the first synthesis of permanent revolution.

However, the book also puts permanent revolution into the context of wider Marxist thought at the turn of the 20th century. What emerges from this collection is that permanent revolution, far from being an exceptional or fringe perspective, was in fact the mainstream view of the most advanced Marxist thinkers in Europe a century ago. Drawing out the origins of permanent revolution helps locate its assumptions and presuppositions, and therefore the foundations of our world view.

Although Marx and Engels used the expression “revolution in permanence” and did discuss some themes in the later debate, including skipping stages, alliances and forms of government, they did not anticipate some of the daring elements of Trotsky’s synthesis.

In 1899, Franz Mehring defended the Marx and Engels version of permanent revolution. In November 1905, he argued that the Russian revolution’s “moving force” was “a proletariat that has understood the ‘Revolution in Permanence’”. However, Mehring said that the working class lacked the power “to skip the stages of historical development and instantly to create a socialist community out of the despotic tsarist state”.

In 1902, Rosa Luxemburg spoke of the “peculiar conception” of “the hope in a so-called ‘revolution in permanence’”, but she did not yet recognise it as a distinctly new

Bloody Sunday, 1905 Russian revolution

policy. In February 1905, in her article, ‘After the First Act’, Luxemburg was the first to refer in the West-European socialist press to a “revolutionary situation in permanence” in Russia.

In December 1905, she described the revolution as being “formally bourgeois-democratic, but essentially proletarian-socialist”. It was, “in both content and method, a transitional form from the bourgeois revolutions of the past to the proletarian revolutions of the future”. In 1907, she emphasised the leading role of the proletariat, the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the incapacity of the peasantry and the international significance of the Russian revolution. However, Luxemburg did not call for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Trotsky acknowledged the contribution made by Parvus to developing the permanent revolution perspective. In his preface to Trotsky’s article, known as ‘What Was Accomplished on 9th January?’ (January 1905), Parvus made his main contribution to the permanent revolution perspective. Parvus argued that “only the workers can complete the revolutionary upheaval in Russia. A Russian provisional government will be a government of workers’ democracy. If Social Democracy stands at the head of the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat, then this government will also be Social-Democratic... It will be an integral government with a Social-Democratic majority”.

PARVUS

It is not difficult to see the affinity with Parvus’ ideas and those of Trotsky. However, there were important differences.

Parvus wrote in ‘Our Tasks’ (13 November 1905) that “We are not yet ready in Russia to assume the task of converting the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution, but we are even less ready to subordinate ourselves to a bourgeois revolution”.

According to Trotsky, Parvus foresaw an “Australian”-type workers’ government in Russia — a government led by a workers’ party but with liberal policies.

The biggest revelation for me in this collection was about the ideas of David Ryazanov, which have previously largely been ignored. Ryazanov’s ‘The Draft Programme of Iskra and the Tasks of Russian Social Democrats’ (1903) was the first Russian text to refer to “revolution in permanentia”. The work was remarkable because it anticipated permanent revolution in almost every detail. Ryazanov “systematically explored the ‘peculiarities’ of Russian history”. Ryazanov was also a participant in the events of 1905, where he advocated a permanentist perspective.

The book also makes a strong case for Karl Kautsky as an innovator on permanent revolution.

In his article, ‘The Slavs and Revolution’ (1902) Kautsky argued that the bourgeoisie was no longer a revolutionary class, the working class was the revolutionary force and that

the Russian movement was an inspiration for Western Europe.

Kautsky’s most significant intervention before the revolution was probably his article ‘Revolutionary Questions’ (February 1904). First, he prefigured the conception of uneven and combined development, as against a mechanical, unilinear scheme, and advocated the political mass strike.

Kautsky also prefigured one of Trotsky’s most distinctive contributions, arguing that a workers’ government would be forced out of necessity to introduce socialist measures: “Wherever the proletariat has conquered political power, socialist production follows as a natural necessity even where the proletariat has not arrived at a socialist consciousness. Its class interests and economic necessity force it to adopt measures that lead to socialist production... If the proletariat has political power, then socialism follows as a matter of necessity”. However, he also conceded that “a revolution in Russia cannot establish a socialist regime at once”.

In July 1905, Kautsky wrote ‘The Consequences of the Japanese Victory and Social Democracy’, which explicitly developed a permanentist perspective. Kautsky used the term “revolution in permanence” in the context of the hegemonic role of the working class and the international significance of the revolution.

Kautsky’s ‘The American Worker’ (February 1906) and ‘The Driving Forces of the Russian Revolution and Its Prospects’ (November 1906) can be read as supporting Trotsky’s permanent revolution, even if they do not go as far as his bold political conclusions.

He reiterated the sociological prerequisites for permanent revolution: foreign-driven capitalist development in absolutist Russia “resulted only in the development of a strong proletariat but not a strong capitalist class”. His most strident conclusion, contrary to the Menshevik view, was that the age of bourgeois revolutions was over.

The book certainly puts paid to the “stereotypical and mistaken view of Kautsky as an apostle of quietism and a reformist cloaked in revolutionary phraseology”.

Trotsky was “certainly the most famous and brilliant proponent of permanent revolution” but “by no means its sole author”. This does not undermine the novelty or distinctiveness of Trotsky’s contribution, especially the central political conclusions.

Permanent revolution was vindicated by the events of 1905 and by the 1917 revolutions. Again the Russian workers shook the old regime until it fell and it was the dual power of the workers’ soviets that provided the platform for the seizure of power in October 1917.

Probing the roots of permanent revolution shows how revolutionary socialists can by analysing reality both foresee the shape of current and future struggles and formulate the key tasks so that workers win those battles.

Organising for 30 November

By Liam McNulty, Cambridge AWL

Trade unionists in Cambridgeshire have taken the first steps in coordinating the strike action taking place on 30 November by establishing a county-wide cross-union strike committee.

The committee involves activists from unions taking action and both the Cambridge and District and Huntingdon Trades Councils.

The initiative came from a joint motion from Unison Cambridgeshire County Branch, the county's largest

trade union, and the PCS Customs and Revenue Branch, which was debated at a recent Trades Council meeting.

Steve Sweeney of Huntingdon and St. Neots Trades Union Council spoke to *Solidarity* in a personal capacity. He said:

"The committee is an important step in the fight against the Con-Dem coalition and will arm the labour movement in the struggles ahead. The strike will not be won or lost in one day. We will not wake up on 1 December with the Tories conceding defeat. It is essential that the strike is

democratically controlled by the rank-and-file and that is the essence of the strike committee. We need to raise the political level and understand the nature of the pensions assault in the context of the crisis of capitalism. The action can be a galvanising point for workers and draw new layers into the Trades Council. The strike committee can help the Trades Council and labour movement become the central point in the anti-cuts fight, arming our class with the ideas to advance the struggle.

"The building blocks are in place and the idea is for

the strike committee to extend beyond November 30th. The first meeting was a positive step with many new faces from different unions. We discussed the day itself and agreed that there should be a march and rally in Cambridge with feeder marches from major workplaces such as Addenbrooke's Hospital and Shire Hall. While these are important as a show of strength and solidarity, the motion agreed to organise a meeting on the day of the strike. The purpose of this was for a rank-and-file meeting discussing the politics of the strike and the

way forward, accepting motions rather than a top down rally style meeting with the usual faces repeating the usual phrases.

"The strike committee will see increased solidarity from other unions and be a forum for debate and sharing of ideas. Branch industrial action committees will feed into the cross-union strike committee, which will meet fortnightly, and vice-versa. There is a long time between now and 30 November, but Cambridgeshire trade unionists have started organising for the future struggle."

The Cambridgeshire

plans are a positive model for the labour movement to follow. They establish a structure through which rank-and-file trade unionists can provide a counterweight to the union bureaucracy, and a forum in which ideas about how to fight to win beyond 30 November can be discussed. This model has the potential to transcend the disconnected, "next-big-day" approach (26 March, then 30 June, then 2 October, then 30 November...), and create strategies to win this battle.

The labour movement in other parts of the country should take note.

Tube pay vote

By a Tubeworker supporter

All four trade unions on London Underground — ASLEF, RMT, TSSA and Unite — are recommending their members accept the company's latest pay and conditions offer: 5% (i.e. RPI minus 0.5%) this year, followed by RPI+0.5% (minimum 2%) for the next three years.

A meeting on 4 October of workplace representatives of the largest union, RMT, voted that the union should hold a referendum recommending acceptance.

Workers' Liberty members in the meeting argued and voted against recommending acceptance, pointing out that signing up to a four-year deal means setting aside important demands (such as shorter hours and a flat-rate minimum pay rise to benefit lower-paid grades) until 2015; and putting away one of the union's best weapons for an all-grades confrontation with management over a period when LU bosses will be at-

tempting to make further job cuts, one grade at a time.

Despite several other reps also arguing this view, the feeling from most reps was that there was not sufficient confidence amongst union members at workplace level for an immediate fight on this issue.

Members of the Socialist Party voted to accept the deal, arguing that not fighting over pay would better enable the union to fight more vigorously on the next battle. This is typical of the SP's "mañana socialism"; the big fight is always the next one.

While it is disappointing that reps did not feel that members had sufficient confidence to take on management over pay at this time, the fact that the RMT went through a democratic process is encouraging.

If such channels of rank-and-file democracy can be built on and expanded, it will help develop members' confidence for future battles, like those coming up on jobs and conditions.

Lecturers begin action

By Pdraig O'Brien

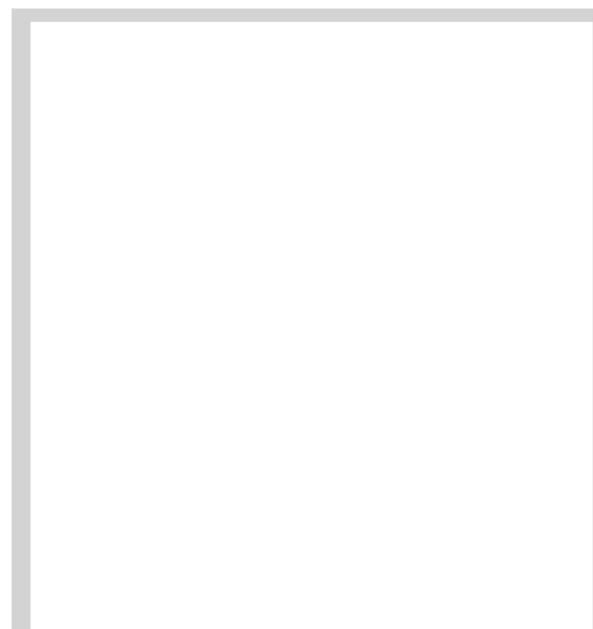
Members of the lecturers' union UCU in pre-1992 institutions will begin their industrial campaign against proposed changes to their pensions scheme, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), on Monday 10 October.

The campaign involves an escalating series of actions, beginning with a work-to-rule and moving to rolling strike action followed by an assessment boycott if there are no concessions from management.

That UCU has designed an escalating programme of

action, intended to apply maximum pressure to bosses, rather than calling a single day, or isolated single days, of protest strikes is positive. But the unions need to use that programme of action to fight for positive, concrete demands rather than the vague call on bosses to enter into further negotiations on USS reform.

UCU branches must also urgently reach out to Unison, Unite and GMB (which organise "lower-grade" workers at many universities) to make sure members of those unions to do not cover work undone by UCU members taking part in the action.



At least 30,000 people, and probably more than that, demonstrated against the Tory party conference in Manchester in the labour movement's staging-post mobilisation before the 30 November strikes.

Unite and GMB, unions which did not participate in the 30 June strikes, had particularly significant mobilisations. Like the 26 March "March for the Alternative", the Manchester demonstration had the feel of having mobilised people beyond the usual left-activist layers.

Young people, families, and local anti-cuts campaigns were well represented on the demonstration.

Southampton out again

By Darren Bedford

Southampton local government workers will be back on strike from Thursday 6 October, marking the three-month point in their battle with council bosses over pay cuts.

Over 1,000 workers — members of Unison and Unite — will walk out, demanding the reversal of contractual changes made in July which have seen some workers suffer pay cuts of up to 15%. The strikers include Unison members working in social

care, and Unite members across a range of council occupations.

The strike day will include a march and rally, as well as a mass meeting for workers to discuss and plan further action.

Unison branch secretary Mike Tucker said: "After three months of enforced pay cuts, Unison members remain determined to continue the fight for the reductions to be reversed.

"Unison members know how much their pay has been reduced while Councillors voted to reject proposals to reduce their own allowances."

10,000 march in Glasgow

By Dale Street

Around 10,000 people marched through torrential rain on the Scottish TUC anti-cuts demonstration held in Glasgow on Saturday 1 October.

How many would have turned up for the demonstration if it had not been for the weather is anybody's guess — but probably as many as turned up for last October's STUC anti-cuts demonstration in Edinburgh.

The continuous downpour also resulted in the concluding rally being restricted to just one speaker — Tony Benn, who spoke in his capacity as an "elder statesman".

Speakers who had no chance to take to the platform included representatives of the Church of Scotland, the Muslim Council of Scotland and the Women's Institute. Some trade union speakers had also been due to speak.

Continuing a long-standing tradition, dating back to the UCS sit-in of 1971, the STUC had sought to build the demonstration as a mobilisation of "civic society", representative of the Scottish people in general, rather than as a specifically trade union event (albeit

one open to others to support).

This explains why the demonstration was called under the banner of "People First", why its slogans were so woolly, why support for it was sought from bodies such as the Church of Scotland and the Salvation Army, and why a speaker from the Women's Institute was included on the list of speakers.

But this attempt to be "broad" and "all-inclusive" — at the expense of the political clarity and focus of the demonstration's demands — achieved nothing.

Trade unions mobilised for the demonstration (along with the organisations of the left). But there were no contingents on the demonstration representing "civic society", in the shape of religious organisations and similar institutions.

The next "big event" in anti-cuts campaigning in Scotland, as in the rest of the country, will be the strikes scheduled to take place on 30 November.

Campaigning to win support for those strikes means putting the working class and its organisations back centre-stage.

Poverty pay in Cameron's Britain

Nearly 10% of care workers are paid illegally low wages, new research by academics at King's College London has found.

Researchers estimate that up to 200,000 workers in that sector alone are paid below the minimum wage — a figure five times higher than official government estimates which claimed that less than 30,000 workers were paid below the statutory minimum.

Even the top minimum wage rate of £6.08 is not enough to live on.

The KCL study comes alongside news from food charity FareShare that its donations had increased by over 5,000 a day since 2010.

The picture is a tragic but crystal clear one: the Coalition government's policies mean poverty and food shortages for thousands of working-class families.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Occupying Wall Street

A New York public sector worker and member of the US socialist group Solidarity reports on the round-the-clock protests at New York's financial centre.

For the past week most of my coworkers and activist networks have been talking about "Occupy Wall St" (OWS) constantly. There's definitely a buzz, and it extends beyond the "usual suspects" of New York's progressive/left scene.

I went down to OWS on Thursday [29 September] (while the "grievances" were being debated) and again on Saturday [1 October], towards the end of the attempt to march across the Brooklyn Bridge.

With the arrests of more than 700, according to the *New York Times*, it seems like the City is taking a gamble that this will be enough to drive away the protest. With the way this has been growing in the past week, it seems like this may actually back-fire.

Ten days ago it was still relatively small, and even more white and young and male than it is now. My impression was that the Ad Busters folks that were so central to initiating OWS hadn't done much outreach to the NY activist community, and very little — if any — to organisa-

tions of people of colour here in the City, whose communities have of course been hardest hit by the recession, compounding already dire situations.

On Saturday 24 September, the NYPD arrested — and pepper sprayed — about 85 people, and OWS grew significantly since.

The rally on Friday 30 September was perhaps bigger than some of the larger rallies organised against budget cuts back in June — at least several thousand. And those June rallies were organised by the major unions, having been planned months ahead of time.

GROWING

In addition to growing in numbers and racial diversity, it seems that the protest is developing some more political clarity in both what it identifies as problems and the objectives it hopes to achieve.

However, it also appears that these efforts to solidify some common "grievances", demands or strategies are very inconsistent.

For example, the initial proposed "grievances" being debated on Thursday evening began with, "As one people, formerly divided by race, gender, sexuality..." The intent was to envision ourselves in a post-racial (and per-

haps post-revolutionary) society, but this wasn't well received.

A small group of women of colour objected to that language "As one people, despite divisions of race, gender, sexuality..." and then the phrase was dropped altogether, replaced with, "As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members."

There have also been some concerns raised about the lack of acknowledgment that the slogan "take back America" ignores the fact that it was stolen from indigenous people here to begin with.

One anecdotal report I heard was that when an older Black activist tried to approach some of the leaders about developing more specific demands, the response was somewhat dismissive, re-focusing on the "crimes of the banks" and away from the day-to-day needs of those struggling to survive the effects of those "crimes" (or more accurately, the larger crisis of capitalism).

It seems that if OWS is to continue to grow and engage the working class of New York, it will need to develop some more constructive ways to engage with the organisations of people of colour in the

City... and there's some reason for being hopeful.

A loose coalition of the city's public sector unions, and the larger of the community groups, has created a "Strong For All Coalition" in support. They are planning a rally in solidarity.

John Samuelson, President of TWU Local 100 (representing most of the mass transit workers), appeared on [television] on Thursday night in support of OWS.

In addition to the unions, some of the most militant, base-building and direct-action focused community groups area are also participating.

Upping the ante in this struggle and achieving measurable wins will require more than crowds... it will require the focused activity of significant layers of the organised working classes, that have the roots and the experience to help leverage the power that is being built against the establishment here and nationally.

Even if we don't get concrete wins, this will have been a hugely important protest for New York and the country, but there is a potential for it to be concretely effective as well, and I hope that we can help it get there.

• Reprinted from solidarity-us.org

Fight for useful work at BAE!

By Stephen Wood, Hull AWL

A retained fire service station in Brough, East Yorkshire, which is responsible for the fire safety of 26,000 people, could close as part of the consequences of huge job losses at the local BAE Systems aerospace plant.

The station is staffed by BAE workers trained as retained fire fighters. The Fire Brigades Union is demanding talks with BAE management to discuss the station's future.

BAE, which was at one point Brough's largest employer, is axing 75% of its workforce as part of nationwide job losses of 3,000. The Brough site manufactures the Hawk Jet, which is largely used as a training aircraft by militaries worldwide. BAE is currently bidding for a £5 billion contract to build 500 new jets for the US military; it appears these many now be manufactured in North America.

BAE's plan for Brough would leave just 400 workers in research and development at the site. The other 900, which includes people with 30 years of history in aircraft engineering as well as apprentices who had worked at the plant for just three weeks, can look forward to the dole queue.

The job losses demonstrate capitalism's contempt for workers' lives; the system sees us as expendable commodities. But the issue is more complex than straightforwardly "defending" the existing jobs and work at BAE. Capitalism's contempt for life is also demonstrated by the purpose to which BAE workers' skills are currently put — building weapons of war for capitalist states to kill other workers.

BAE Systems is one of the largest military contractors in the world and has large contracts with the UK, US, Australia, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. BAE's equipment has helped to end the lives of Afghans, Iraqis and Bahraini protestors this year alone.

Sadly the responses of Unite and GMB, the unions organising BAE workers, have predictably

reactionary and defensive. Rather than fighting for an urgently-required expansion of socially-useful work for BAE's highly-skilled workforce, the unions have used the job losses to slam defence cuts and praise the UK's "proud" military history.

The unions' campaign plan consists of:

- Lobbying the Government to invest in new technology that could bring more work to Brough

- Calling on the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to sign a partnership agreement with BAE to build new aircraft

- Urging ministers to do more to persuade other countries to invest in the UK's defence industry

The labour movement should not side with warmongering powers and neither should it be proud of the UK's reputation for great innovation in military hardware, when that hardware is used to kill our fellow workers in other countries.

There is a precedent from the aerospace industry for workers developing their own plans to resist job losses and repurpose their factories. Workers at the Lucas Aerospace plant developed a radical workers' plan to reorganise their workplaces to produce socially-useful products such as medical equipment and renewable energy resources rather than military hardware.

Their fight for jobs was turned into a broader fight for a world where workers' skills are not used to make weapons to kill each other. Workers at other factories producing socially and environmentally destructive products followed their example, including workers at the Hawker-Siddeley plant in Brough (which later became part of BAE), who contacted the Lucas workers to discuss repurposing and diversification.

Our unions must build on the lessons of the Lucas Plan, and the other workers' plans it inspired, to provide BAE workers with radical alternatives to both job losses and continuing to allow bosses to put their skills to use in the service of imperialist warfare.

• More on Lucas: bit.ly/oh1Cq6

BLOCK THE BRIDGE

BLOCK THE BILL

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SUN 9TH OCTOBER

The Coalition government's Health and Social Care Bill, which drastically pushes forward privatisation and marketisation in health care, has its second reading in the House of Lords on 11 October.

Some Lib Dem peers are likely to move serious amendments.

UK Uncut has called a demonstration on Sunday 9 October, planning to block Westminster Bridge, between St Thomas's Hospital and Parliament, in protest against the Bill.

On 4 October nearly four hundred doctors and public health experts published a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* opposing the Bill and declaring that it "will do irreparable harm to the NHS, to individual patients and to society as a whole".

• More: bit.ly/9oct-bridge