

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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BENEFIT CUTS HIT 27 MILLION



Labour-controlled Lambeth council has set up an advice line to help claimants facing housing, council tax, disability and other benefit cuts. The same council is passing on government cuts! It plans to make some people currently on full council tax benefit pay some council tax.

Build a labour-movement campaign: see page 5

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

- 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

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Tunisia: shaking the Islamists

By Gerry Bates

Mobilisation since the murder on 6 February of a left-wing politician, Chokri Belaïd, has shaken the Islamist government in Tunisia.

Prime minister Hamadi Jebali has called on all ministers to resign so that he can replace the current administration — a coalition of his Islamist party, Ennahda, with two smaller secular parties — by a "government of technocrats" to run until parliamentary elections in mid-July.

This is his fallback gambit

after his initial call for the dissolution of the government was rejected both by Tunisia's president, a secular politician, and by Jebali's own party.

The trade-union federation UGTT called an effective general strike on the day of Chokri Belaïd's funeral, 8 February, and even on government estimates 40,000 attended the funeral. There were also demonstrations against the Islamists across the country, sometimes including attacks on public and Ennahda party buildings.

The UGTT's demands for its general strike included

the dissolution of the "Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution", an Ennahda militia which has taken part in attacks on UGTT offices.

On 9 February Ennahda's youth movement called a counter-demonstration, with demagogic slogans against "counter-revolution", against "French interference", and for "the mandate of the ballot-box". Despite also being backed by salafist groups, it drew only 3000 to 4000.

The "Left Workers' League", a Trotskyist group in Tunisia, has warned against "the escalation of

political violence clearly inspired by the Ennahda movement and its cowardly henchmen, its terrorist militias and its criminal leaders". It declares that Ennahda is "putting the country in hock to the Gulf states and the imperialists".

"Let's get rid of the government and the Constituent Assembly members, and elect militant local committees to create a situation of dual power!"

"Let's all call for civil disobedience and a general strike to bring down the regime".

Greek workers strike on 20 February

By Theodora Polenta

On 20 February the Greek trade union federations GSEE and ADEDY have called for a 24-hour general strike.

The strike is against the government's move to abolish general coverage of industrial collective bargaining agreements. The unions call for a new national general collective bargaining agreement after the current one expires on 30 March.

The decision to strike was taken on 31 January. January was dominated by the nine-day strike of the subway workers over wages, and the government's use of "civil mobilisation orders" to order the strikers back to work.

Other transportation workers struck in solidarity, and were subsequently threatened with civil mobilisation orders. There have been rolling strikes by ferry workers and shipyard workers. Farmers have erected barricades and blocked roads to protest against the abrupt increases in their costs.

Media workers have struck against the abolition of collective bargaining agreements. Health care workers have struck against the closing down and merging of hospitals. A metal factory has been taken over by its workers, who are now running under self-organisation and workers' control.

In a 24-hour strike on 31 January thousands of striking hospital workers from all around Greece filled the streets of Athens. Simulta-

Greek steelworkers on strike last year

neously, hundreds of subway workers wearing shirts saying "conscripted worker", and other transportation workers, marched on the Ministry of Finance.

The two marches joined and met with the hundreds gathered outside the court, mainly members of the Communist Party protesting against the arrests of trade unionists who had been arrested because they occupied the Ministry of Labour the previous day.

BIGGEST
In Piraeus, all 23 first-level trade unions, aligned with different streams of the left, marched alongside the sailors and ferry workers unions in one of the biggest demonstrations in the city.

All this could be the beginning of a new escalation of strikes, protests, sit-ins, and occupations.

The blue bus drivers have a new general meeting on 14 February. The subway and other transportation workers are preparing to break the "civil mobilisation" orders.

Municipal workers are mobilising against the privatisation of local government services. Public sector

workers are ready to fight against partial lay-offs ("reserve employment") and redundancies.

Students and academics are preparing a new wave of strikes and occupations against the merging and closing down of universities and departments.

The coalition government has responded with an escalation of authoritarianism.

The struggle should be escalated with the 24 hour general strike of 20 February and continued. In every workplace it is imperative to organise meetings, discussions and assemblies. It is imperative to form strike committees to organise the strike in every workplace and to involve the maximum of number in the strike demo on 20 February.

Each strike committee should organise its workplace to participate on 20 February strike but also organise the struggles and strikes before and after 20 February in coordination and cooperation with other strike committees.

The workers need an answer to why they have recently "lost" battles and the three party coalition government is not overthrown.

Rank and file trade

unionists and the most advanced class conscious workers alongside the Left need to address the chronic intrinsic weaknesses of the labor movement, the absence of programmatic unity, of a plan of action. They need to combat the illusions that problems can be addressed in a strictly fragmented and sectional way.

It should be made apparent that the only way to get rid of the memoranda is via a political solution — a government of the united left, dialectically linked to the struggles of the trade union movement and community movements, as a first step to achieve workers' power and control.

It is imperative to explain that the government's resort to measures like civil mobilisation orders comes from its inability to offer the workers and other popular strata any positive narrative.

In order for a massive mobilisation of workers, unemployed, and young people to be achieved on 20 February, we need the local organisations of the Left parties, apart from their visits to workplaces, also to organise before 20 February joint actions, pickets and open assemblies in their neighbourhoods, alongside the neighbourhood committees.

It requires occupations of public spaces, public buildings and roads in the days before 20 February strike, to give the best message for coordination and escalation of struggles.

Market worship leads to tragedy



By Todd Hamer

Robert Francis' report into the neglect and abuses at Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust is 2,000 pages of horror stories about a hospital trust that was celebrated by NHS bosses and that went unnoticed by a "plethora" of regulators.

The abuses included: patients being left in excrement in soiled bedclothes for lengthy periods; water left out of reach so patients was forced to drink out of flower vases; patients denied help with eating and left to go hungry. The Trust had an abnormally high death rate and many patients were denied their basic human dignity even in death.

The report concludes with 290 recommendations aimed at preventing similar abuses in the future. However Francis skillfully avoids the big political question.

Francis argues that the problems at Mid-Staffs were systemic: the patients were "failed by a system...that put corporate self-interest and cost-control ahead of patients and their safety".

The problems started in 2005/6 as the then Health Secretary tried to claw back some money after costly re-organisations. Pressure from the top called for tighter "financial turn-around". New Labour had also launched the Foundation Trust initiative; Trusts, including Mid Staffs were

trying to jump through the hoops to win FT status.

Management made cuts to staffing. They insisted that remaining staff spend their time producing statistics rather than looking after patients. Qualified nursing staff spent their shifts in front of computers managing targets whilst unqualified staff ran the wards — badly.

Management had no idea what was going on as they saw their role as processing the data and balancing the books. They never stepped onto the wards. Poor standards were tolerated so long as the stats looked good. Management did not want to hear bad news and downplayed criticism.

STRATEGY
But this strategy worked in its own terms.

Mid Staffs Trust was able to produce enough paperwork and healthy looking balance sheets to impress Monitor — the quango charged with assessing Foundation Trust applications — and gain its FT status. As Francis states: "an elaborate, resource-consuming process failed to achieve what should have been its primary objective; ensuring that the only organisations authorised were those with minimum standards on a consistent and sustainable basis."

But Francis is naive. The primary *purpose* of this exercise is to create autonomous bits of the NHS outside of the responsibility of the Secretary of State, that run on a competitive basis and would form the basis for future marketisation and privatisation.

The obsession with tar-

gets and data is part of the same process. The New Labour government had a new convert's zeal for the free market which they worshipped like a god.

However, the NHS is particularly resistant to market interference. Affixing price tags to the healing arts is not straightforward. A hundred and one bits of data can be collected, but which ones reflect real health outcomes? Setting targets on the basis of these outcomes often just produces perverse results. But the main perverse result is that nurses are taken away from their patients to feed an ever growing market-based bureaucracy.

Capitalist ideology says the market can do what human beings cannot. It can regulate economic life with a precision and responsiveness that us mere mortals cannot replicate. But Mid-Staffs shows that the opposite is the case.

Here market-type systems absolved management and politicians of their responsibility and accountability, distorted priorities and provided misleading data.

When David Cameron responded to the report in the House of Commons he was

adamant: "We need the words of patients and frontline staff to ring through the boardrooms of our hospitals and, frankly, right beyond into the regulators and into the Department of Health itself." But how far is this from the Nye Bevan's vision: "if a bedpan is dropped in Tredegar the sound should reverberate through the Palace of Westminster"?

Francis tactfully avoids any of these conclusions. Having talked repeatedly about "systemic failures" he stops short of naming the system that caused them.

His claims "it should be possible to protect patients... from unacceptable and unsafe care whatever the system of provision" is unconvincing. Presumably this is a sop to his paymasters, but it means the report is woefully inadequate.

Francis wants a "fundamental change" in the "culture of the NHS". But culture does not drop from the sky. It is built upon material, structural, systemic foundations.

The culture in which patients were left "unwashed, unfed and without water" and were treated with "callous indifference" was built on the foundations of New

Gove backs down

By Julian Kelly

Education Secretary Michael Gove is to scrap his proposals to replace some GCSE exams with a new English Baccalaureate Certificate (EBC).

Gove's initiative was the inevitable result of his "back to basics" approach to education; seeking a reputation as a reformer (and the support of the Tory right wing) he has hit the education sector repeatedly — undermining terms and conditions, reducing pensions and introducing the divisive and discriminatory Academy Phase Two programme.

This humiliating change in policy is doubly ironic.

Firstly, the majority of the critical committee were Conservative MPs.

However, the National Union of Teachers was notable in its haste to send celebratory material to school reps, announcing victory.

Powerful words from a union which has just decided to delay strike action until the summer term, against the express wishes of rank-and-file membership.

This is a success story, but a limited one; a flawed system was to be replaced by a considerably more flawed system which will now be replaced by a slightly revamped version of the original flawed system.

The examination system is the product of industrial capitalism, designed to make it easier to decide who gets to work lifting heavy things and who gets the office manager's desk. It has nothing to do with learning or personal development. It's an

anachronism and, like huge class sizes and underfunding, helps turn education into an assembly line.

Losing the EBC is a victory; replacing it with a "new GCSE" takes us back to where we started.

Obama: licensed to kill?

By Chris Reynolds

A US channel has leaked a document written by US government lawyers which argues that it is lawful for the President to kill US citizens just so long as "an informed, high-ranking official" declares that the citizen presents a "continuing" threat to the US.

It is not necessary for a specific attack on the US to

be in process. The document claims that the courts can play no role in evaluating these declarations, so if the US military targets and kills a US citizen whom an official has declared the citizen to be a target, there is no basis for challenging the killing in court.

The document was apparently prompted by the case of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen who

was targeted and killed in a drone strike in Yemen in 2011. US government officials say al-Awlaki was the leader of an al-Qaeda affiliate.

The US government wants the scope for military action which a declaration of war would give it, but without declaring war, because it's not possible to make the so-called "war on terror" a declared war in the same way as a

war against a named country.

Despite Obama dropping Bush's "war on terror" rhetoric, drone strikes have increased from around 50 during the George W. Bush administration to more than 350 over the past four years.

The American Civil Liberties Union has sued the Justice Department to publish the lawyers' document.

More drone strikes than Bush

NUS should build on local battles

By AWL students

On 8-10 April the annual National Union of Students conference will take place in Sheffield. The student movement must take this as an opportunity to set NUS on a new, decisive course.

The NUS leadership took a battering during the student mobilisations of 2010-2011, when then-President Aaron Porter denounced student demonstrators and offered no support to the movement against the fee hike. Porter was hounded off demonstrations — even symbolically “kettled” by leftwingers during a Labour Students Conference in 2011! — and pushed out of office.

The NUS leadership might like to think that they have changed tack under the subsequent leadership of Liam Burns, a Labour student union officer from Scotland and ostensibly more “capable” and “leftwing” than Porter. In reality NUS remains rudderless.

NUS’s major action since the last conference was half-organising a national demonstration around a meaningless slogan (“Educate Employ Empower”), at the end of which disappointed demonstrators hurled fruit at the National President. Beyond that, there has been a badly-attended “activist” training event, and a lobby of Parliament over further education funding which attracted little attention from students, the press or the government.

Since the government shelved its Higher Education Bill, the Tories’ planned process of radical marketising reform has slowed. There is no major wave of cuts underway in Higher Education, and none seems to be planned, given

universities’ improved income from £9,000 fees.

But in the general climate of marketisation, austerity and ruling-class offensive, numerous small, local battles are breaking out.

Sussex University students are currently occupying against the contracting-out of 235 jobs. In Birmingham there have been fights against sackings — of University of Birmingham teacher José Nafafé and Halesowen College UCU Chair Dave Muritu. In London, UCL students occupied against the buy-out and privatisation of the Carpenters Estate and a student tenants’ union has been set up by the University of London Union. At Edinburgh University, the autonomy of the Students Association has come under attack from a non-elected General Manager.

This constant bubbling of local fights shows the direction that NUS must take. The union could weave these battles into a single national thread, link them and invigorate them with a programme for democracy, free education, and student-worker solidarity. It could mobilise students around broader issues such as the fight to save the NHS, and in solidarity with the trade union and labour movement. Instead these battles are left to local activists and the National Cam-

paign Against Fees and Cuts coalition to support and publicise, while the current NUS leadership blunders on obliviously.

There is an urgent need for a coherent set of political responses to the struggles and attacks going on in the higher education sector, for the NUS to make the case for free, democratically-controlled education as a solution to them.

NUS needs to move from its self-conception as an inhabitant of the “Westminster policy village” (a village where NUS is roundly mocked by the real political operators) to a political fighting force.

There is a debate among student activists around alternatives to NUS’s sclerotic, bureaucratic structure, with many proposals being discussed. Workers’ Liberty Students are advocating developing the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts to include a federated structure of local anti-cuts groups; continuing the struggle in NUS, including by fighting for an expansion of NUS democracy; and also building a federation of student unions that want to fight, a federation that will remain within NUS but also take decisions, organise and mobilise independently of it.

At NUS conference, AWL members will be working with others in the NCAFC to put forward motions and stand candidates arguing for these ideas. If you’re going as a delegate to the conference, or want to come and help, get in touch.

- students@workersliberty.org
- For information about NCAFC candidates, model motions for the conference and other materials, see www.anticuts.com

Inadequate slogans and inadequate logic

Letters



In responding to my criticism of the resolution passed on Syria at the AWL National Committee on 5 January this year, Colin Foster seizes on one minor aspect of my argument to teach us all a lesson about the tricky business of formulating adequate political slogans.

Given that Colin and myself are in absolute agreement on this matter, why am I bothering to respond once more?

Because unfortunately, Colin has picked on what he must imagine to be the weakest aspect of what I wrote. By concentrating his fire on this “weakness”, he has failed to take up my points regarding the faults and limitations of the National Committee resolution.

My initial letter points out that *Solidarity* has previously carried calls for Assad to go, whereas the new resolution makes no reference to Assad whatsoever. I used this fact to illustrate that a shift in political assessment has taken place. At no point do I call for these slogans to be resurrected in isolation from other considerations. In fact, my letter recognises that the situation has shifted. I even remark that the NC resolution “goes some way to addressing” what has changed.

What the NC resolution also does as a result of its structure, logical flow, omissions and emphasis is to imply that Assad and his close political clique could play some role in a peaceful political resolution to the current Syrian conflict. This is the specific problem to which I have attempted to respond and the specific problem that Colin fails to address.

If the old slogans calling for Assad’s downfall are now inadequate, it is also the case that the logic of the resolution — which represents the considered opinion of the AWL’s leadership — is also inadequate.

I am in no way suggesting that anyone on the NC thinks Assad is anything other than a bloody tyrant, a despot, dictator, murderer etc... I am, however, suggesting that the resolution has implicit flaws that need correcting.

Tom Unterrainer, Nottingham AWL

Self-emancipation

I’m interested by Eric Lee’s idea that Quentin Tarantino’s takes on Nazism and American slavery (*Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*) promote the idea of self-emancipation, unlike Steven Spielberg’s (*Schindler’s List* and *Lincoln*).

But I don’t agree that “the reality is that it wasn’t Black slaves who brought down slavery” but “a mostly (though not entirely) white army led by a white man”. Of course I am not denying the role of the US army in the US Civil War. Nonetheless, American slaves played a central role, perhaps the central role, in their own emancipation.

Just before the Civil War, an excited Marx wrote:

“In my view, the most momentous thing happening in the world today is... the movement among the slaves in America... I have just seen in the Tribune that there was a new slave uprising in Missouri, naturally suppressed. But the signal has now been given.”

When the war began, the Northern government insisted it had no interest in touching slavery — and meant it. Protect-

ing slavery came above winning the war. Northern commanders were ordered to suppress slave uprisings and returned runaways to their owners. But the anti-slavery activists who supported the North because they believed the logic of the struggle would push the question of slavery to the fore were proved right.

As more and more slaves escaped their masters and pushed their way into Northern lines, they not only forced the US army to accept them, first as workers and then as soldiers. They helped fundamentally shift the debate on slavery and black rights in the North itself.

After Lincoln’s January 1863 “Emancipation Proclamation” — which in fact emancipated nobody, but the slaves didn’t care — this movement became a tumultuous social upheaval, a “general strike” (WEB DuBois), one which eventually swept away the Southern Confederacy and any hope for maintaining slavery. Without it, the North might have lost, with enormous consequences for human progress.

After the war, the ex-slaves’ movement for freedom and equality would eventually be defeated. But that should not blind us to the central role they played in destroying slavery.

Sacha Ismail, south London

Not in our backyard?

On 30 January Cumbria county council voted against allowing further surveys to see if an underground dump for spent nuclear fuel can be safely built in its area.

According to the *Financial Times*, “county councillors, who face elections in May, cited public opposition as the reason for their vote to withdraw. Tens of thousands have campaigned against hosting the dump, saying it would ruin the Lake District’s tourism industry and threaten health”.

In fact the vote was a triumph for the NIMBY (“not in my back yard”) principle, similar to the frequent blocking of wind turbines by local authorities.

Even if you reject nuclear power out of hand — which I don’t — the nuclear waste already exists. No amount of political posturing will make it disappear. It has to be stored

safely somewhere.

The county council vote was not a reasonable objection to a rushed move to construct an underground dump without proper research into its long-term security, but a ban on further investigation.

One deep underground dump is already in operation in Eddy County, New Mexico, USA, but takes only USA military nuclear waste.

Other deep dumps are due to start construction soon at Östhammar, Sweden, and Olkiluoto, Finland. They are designed to be safe for tens of thousands of years at a minimum.

Martin Thomas, Islington

Benefit cuts hit 27 million

Over 27 million people will be affected by the benefit cuts due to kick in from April. 11.5 million children will be among them. The cuts will hit at least 9.5 million out of the UK's 22 million households.

Labour leader Ed Miliband has focused on the "bedroom tax", a cut in housing benefit for all council or housing association benefits who are deemed to have spare bedrooms.

"He is making disabled people in council and housing association homes pay more when they need more space due to their disability. Divorced parents whose kids come to stay are being affected. Grandparents will pay more.

"And on the same day as this bedroom tax comes into effect he is giving thousands of millionaires a tax cut of £100,000 a year. It is the economics of a man who listens only to a small group of his rich and powerful friends".

31% of working-age housing benefit claimants in the social sector will lose money, an average of £14 a week.

A raft of other changes are also due to start in April. The most wide-ranging is the Government's cap of one per cent on increases in most working-age benefits and tax credits for three years from 2013-14. If inflation continues at its current rate of about 3% a year, that will mean a real-terms cut of 6% for all claimants by 2016-7.

For example, a single-parent primary school teacher with two children stands to lose £424 a year by 2015.

From April, most unemployed and low-waged people who currently get full council tax benefit will have to pay some council tax, probably about £5 a week. The Government has abolished council tax benefit, replaced it by "council tax support" to be administered by local councils, and cut the money available to councils for it to 10% less than they currently pay in council tax benefit. Most councils will demand a payment even from the unemployed.

Disability Living Allowance for working-age people will be replaced by Personal Independence Payments. The Government's own estimate is that harsher criteria will throw 500,000 people off benefit by 2015-6.

CLAIMANTS

This will happen in phases. New claimants for DLA will be switched to PIP instead from April this year in some areas, and June in others.

People already claiming DLA who report a change in circumstances will be switched to PIP from October 2013. The rest will be switched from 2015.

The Government's cap on each household's total benefits will also start to kick in. This will especially hit large households living in areas of high housing costs. Like the child benefit cut-off, the cap threatens to cut deeper and deeper as inflation progresses.

Since January 2013, the Government has cut child benefit for households where someone has an income over £50,000. The measure incorporates no schedule to increase the £50,000 threshold (or the £60,000 threshold for complete cut-off of child benefit); so in ten years' time, this cut could affect households where someone has only the average pay rate for workers with over ten years' experience in their job.

The cuts hit people over the whole range. Pensioners, so far, have held their own better than younger people, because pensioners mobilise, protest, and vote more than younger people. The poorer and younger are hit hardest.

One survey estimates:

- The average person will lose £467 per year from the

The TUC recently conducted a poll about benefit claimants exposing myths and misinformation.

whole package of cuts.

- People in poverty will lose an average of £2,195 each.
- Disabled people will lose an average of £4,410 each.
- People with severe disabilities will lose an average of £8,832 each.

At the same time the Government has cut the top rate of income tax and the rate of corporation tax. The total benefit cuts are as much as would be got by a 4.5% supertax on the incomes of the top 10% (not touching their wealth), or a 0.4% tax on their wealth (not touching their income). But, far from putting even those small squeezes on the rich, the Government is making them better off by cutting their taxes.

The aim is to create an economy where millions are desperate for any sort of job, and will do "workfare" for zero wages, or toil for very low pay, and where the slightest beginnings of recovery from slump will bring double-zooming profits to the top one per cent.

To their shame, neither the unions nor the Labour Party have organised any large demonstrations against these benefits. But a little flurry of local meetings and protests is starting to develop.

Tax the rich! Expropriate the banks! Reverse the cuts! Make decent jobs for all, at a living wage!

Workfare is against the law!

High Court judges have ruled that the regulations under which most "workfare" schemes were created were unlawful.

Unemployed workers Cait Reilly and Jamie Wilson have won landmark appeal cases that ruled that schemes which forced them to work for free or risk losing benefits contravened laws prohibiting forced labour.

The ruling means that people currently working on "workfare" programmes could walk off the job and claim money back from the government.

Solicitor Tessa Gregory, from the firm which represented Reilly and Wilson, said: "This judgment sends Iain Duncan Smith back to the drawing board to make fresh regulations which are fair and comply with the court's ruling.

"Until that time nobody can be lawfully forced to participate in schemes affected such as the Work Programme and the Community Action Programme.

"All of those who have been stripped of their benefits have a right to claim the money back that has been unlawfully taken away from them."

AWL fund: advertise on May Day

Solidarity is inviting trade union branches, Trades Councils, and other left and labour movement organisations to take out May Day greetings and advertisements in our May Day issue, which will appear in the week beginning Monday 29 April.

A 78mm x 84mm, two-column advert costs £15, and a 78mm x 174mm three-column advert is £25. Organisations should send artwork and text by Friday 26 April to solidarity@workersliberty.org. All funds will contribute towards our May Day financial appeal.

Help us raise £15,000 by May Day 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.
- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

- Organising a fundraising event.

- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.



Total raised so far: £7,044

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

..... (its address)

.....

Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

Please make payments to the debit of my account:

Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no.

20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank,

9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ to be paid on the day

of (month) 20

(year) and thereafter monthly until this order is

cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

The cuts: where we're at

Vicki Morris reviews the cuts made so far by the Conservative-Lib Dem government, and the state of the anti-cuts movement

The Conservative-Lib Dem Coalition Government formed in May 2010 quickly moved to make cuts, in an attempt, they said, to reduce the budget deficit that was largely the result of the banks bailout. The real effect of the cuts — and their aim — has been to slash the welfare state. We are still near the start of the process, but already the Tories and their Lib Dem partners are causing real suffering to working-class people.

STARTING AS THEY MEAN TO GO ON

In May 2010 the new Government moved quickly to cut £6.2 billion.

The measures included cutting more than £1 billion from central government allocations to local government, and freezing civil service recruitment, and “efficiencies”. The civil service union PCS commented: “With some departments being told to axe hundreds of millions of pounds from their budgets for this year, the union does not believe this can be done without hitting vital public services”.

The *Financial Times* called the Government's first budget in June 2010 a “bloodbath” and predicted “huge jobs cull looms as services hit”. The Institute for Fiscal Studies called the cuts the “longest, deepest, sustained period of cuts to public services spending at least since World War 2” and said “[The cuts] are likely to hit poorer households significantly harder than richer households.” The impact on the poorest families of welfare reforms would become worse with each passing year.

The budget said public spending should be cut by 25% by 2014-15. The budget for health would be frozen, not cut, but with demand and costs increasing, this too was effectively a cut.

The previous Labour government had planned to make cuts, but the Coalition Government increased the total of savings to be made from £52 billion to £84 billion (by 2014-5). These plans would cost the average household £5,000 a year by 2015-6, in lost services, reduced benefits, reduced pay, and increased VAT. The Treasury's own figures estimated that the budget cuts would mean 1.3m job losses, 500,000 directly in the public sector.

The Government spelled out the details in the autumn 2010 Spending Review which covers the four years 2011-12 to 2014-15 and aimed at “balancing the books” by 2016.

Detail on the cuts:

- May 2010 “The first six billion” <http://alturl.com/7qbcf>
- June 2010 “FT calls budget ‘this bloodbath’” <http://alturl.com/cxo4v>
- October 2012 “An avalanche of cuts” <http://alturl.com/32krp>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A key area cut is local government. Local authorities are reallocated a lot less money by central government, at the same time as the demands on local services rise.

The cuts are worse to poorer areas (many of them in the north of England), leading to council leaders writing panicked — and futile — letters to the Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles. The council funding settlement announced in late 2012 included an additional squeeze averaging 1.7% but some areas will be cut by up to 8.8%. Pickles said the settlement was a “bargain” and “The settlement leaves councils with considerable total spending power.” Council leaders of England's seven

biggest cities told Pickles: “there will be no money for anything but social care and refuse collection later in this decade.”

Whole authorities face going broke. For example, the Local Government Association considers Conservative-controlled West Somerset council “not viable” in the long term. The Council is looking at becoming a “commissioning authority”. Almost all of its staff would be transferred to private sector outsourcing companies who will deliver services on behalf of the council. The Council will shrink to a commissioning “hub”, with service levels agreed in contracts that will be hard to get out of should services not be up to scratch. Under such arrangements outsourcing company — Capita, Serco et al — will make profits from reducing the workforce, and cutting pay and conditions, as they are doing in the London Borough of Barnet, another Conservative administration embracing the “commissioning council” model.

Many councils set their budgets for the period to 2014/15 in 2011. The cuts in the first year were significant and noticeable but they will be worse again this year and in years to come. It is estimated that 70% of the cuts still lie ahead. And it is important to note that most of the forecasts of the amount of money the Government will have to spend, for example, through the proceeds of taxation, have been over-optimistic, leading to yet more demands of savings for the Government to meet its goal of a balanced budget.

FIGHT THE CUTS!

It was clear even before the 2010 election that the labour movement should be preparing to fight the cuts. The response, however, has been, alas, predictably and woefully inadequate. Trade union and Labour Party leaders do not have the passion and belief — and often the interest — in a proper fightback.

After the 2010 election, rank and file trade unionists, socialists and campaigners set up anti-cuts groups, but after an initial flurry of activity and protests at council budget-setting meetings, these died back.

The situation was made worse by some socialist groups trying to grab leadership of a united grassroots anti-cuts movement that did not yet exist. The money and effort put into building the competing fronts — SWP with its Right to Work/Unite the Resistance, Counterfire with its Coalition of Resistance, and the Socialist Party with its National Shop Stewards Network — has been a criminal waste.

There are signs of local anti-cuts groups reviving. In a few places, groups have continued growing, most successfully when they cohered defensive single-issue campaigns around threatened services, and provided a forum for wider discussions of strategy and political responses.

Networks such as the numerous bodies that have come together to organise National Libraries Day can be a valuable way for the anti-cuts movement to build protests and share information.

Most important are those campaigns and bodies that aim at changing the labour movement into what it needs to be if we are to meet the onslaught. Campaigns such as Councillors Against Cuts and rank and file groupings in trade unions, such as the Local Associations Network in the NUT, are precious initiatives that must be nurtured.

- Anti-cuts action: falseeconomy.org.uk/campaigns/uk/all/t2
- Councillors Against Cuts: councillorsagainstcuts.org
- Local Associations Network: www.nutlan.org.uk
- Social Work Action Network: www.socialworkfuture.org

Fight t

Manchester

Occupying t

By Karen Broady

This week Manchester City Council's executive committee meets to discuss the proposed budget for 2013. Included in the discussions are plans to close our local library and swimming pool here in Levenshulme Manchester.

We had a community planning meeting, attended by more than 60 people and four local councillors. During the meeting Julie Reid, councillor for Gorton South, said “over our dead bodies will we let these pools close”.

Julie Reid represents one of the poorest areas in Europe, where child poverty, unemployment and poor health are high. Manchester has been named the child poverty capital of Britain, with 25,000 children growing up in extreme poverty.

Gorton residents regularly use the local pool since theirs closed in 2001. Anger in the area is at an all-time high. In a build-up to the decision to be made on 8 March, Friday night saw local residents, their children, and councillor Aftab Ahmed, occupy the library building.

The occupiers held a “read-in”, and children read from their favourite books. It was a peaceful protest but the police were called in. The occupation ended at midnight with dozens of people waiting outside to greet them and with plans for a demonstration the following day.

The next morning more than 300 people marched down Stockport Road to protest against the £80 million cuts planned by Manchester City Council in response to the Coalition government slashing its funding.

They marched to the library and held a “die-in”, lying down in the road to mark the “death” of public services.

The reductions demanded in government departmental spending by 2014/15 (largest spending departments):

Education	-11%
Defence	-8%
Scotland	-11%
Communities and local government	-36%
Business	-28%
Wales	-11%
Transport	-15%

[Health is the biggest spending department.]

From: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/spending-review/8077222/Spending-Review-the-winners-and-losers-by-Government-department.html

the cuts!

to save services

Residents occupied threatened Levenshulme Library overnight

Councillor Ahmed also attended and said:

“This is my community and this is my ward. People feel very strongly about the library closure. This demonstration is very peaceful and very public spirited.”

Vicky Rosin, deputy chief executive for Manchester council, said:

“There is a consultation going on about the library proposals as part of the democratic process — and that is how people who want to have their say about the proposals can get their voices heard.”

Unfortunately, the consultation leaflets and information

about consultation meetings are not reaching local residents, though the local campaign is doing its best to get this information out there.

The Council’s Labour leadership argue that they have no choice but to reduce Manchester’s services and that setting an illegal budget would lead to even worse cuts imposed by Eric Pickles.

This was answered by one of the campaigners, Charlotte Smith, who said:

“If one city — and Liverpool’s in the same situation, Sheffield’s in the same situation — actually stood up to the

cuts you could bring down the government.

“This is a weak, coalition government. The city stood up against Thatcher in the 1980s, and that was against a strong government.”

She called on other parts of Manchester to take action against the removal of their local services.

“Join us”, she said. “If everyone in Manchester does this, united we can stop the cuts.”

Glasgow

Fighting rent rises

By John Yorkshire

Tenants in the Glasgow suburb of Maryhill are organising a campaign of resistance to rent hikes being imposed on them by Queens Cross Housing Association.

Queens Cross is one of the largest providers of social housing in Glasgow, with around 4,500 properties across the north west of the city. The housing association has come in for stark criticism after announcing a 4.6% rent hike for tenants staying in the Cedar Court high flats.

This latest increase follows a 4.5% rent rise last year. This back-to-back increase over two years is especially hard on many tenants who are being hit hard by increases in fuel bills, the bedroom tax and a public sector pay freeze.

Residents also complain that much vaunted improvements to the fabric of the flats and the surrounding area have failed to materialise.

Residents I spoke to complained of damp flats, highly inefficient and expensive heating systems and lifts prone to breaking down.

Cedar Court tenants demonstrate against planned rent rises

Mark Rooney, a resident in Cedar Court for 10 years, complained bitterly that Queens Cross had repeatedly failed to deliver on promised improvements since taking over ownership of the blocks from Glasgow Housing Association. Mark, who is registered blind and in receipt of disability benefit, says he faces having to decide between heating his flat and spending money on food.

Mark’s neighbour, Alice Coy, works as a nurse. She explained to me how these pressures, combined with a perceived lack of consultation from the housing association, spurred the residents to begin a campaign against the rent rises.

Alice described how she and other tenants had gone door to door across the entire estate to organise resistance to the rent hikes.

In a couple of weeks of hard work a group of local activists have organised a petition of 600 signatures which they presented to the Queens Cross management during a demonstration outside their offices on Friday afternoon.

They have also manufactured banners condemning the rent hikes which, wind allowing, are being displayed from the balconies of all three high rise blocks. Activists have also translated material into Chinese and Polish in order to get their message across to tenants from these communities.

The campaigners are dedicated to fighting the rent hikes and improving their area, but they also hope that the spirit of solidarity and unity of purpose that they have shared during the campaign will lead to improvements in other areas of life for people in the area.

As Alice put it, “We are gaining a better feeling of community. We feel like we know each other better and we can look after each other and help each other out with other things.”

In the short time the campaign has been running they have done a great job of raising awareness and garnering support, both within the estate and across the rest of the city. If anybody would like to get involved they should contact Alice via the campaign’s web page.

• <http://cedarsaysno.wordpress.com/>

Workers can counter climate crisis

Paul Vernadsky reviews *Trade Unions in the Green Economy: Working for the Environment* by Nora Räthzel and David Uzzell

The widening gap between the risks of ecological degradation and the politics needed to prevent massive damaging social and environmental impacts is well illustrated by recent climate announcements.

Last month the draft US National Climate Assessment reported increased storms, floods, heatwaves and droughts that are already affecting farming, transport, water and health. It concludes that “global warming is due primarily as a result of human activities, including the copious burning of fossil fuels”. Yet International Energy Agency figures confirm that global greenhouse gas emissions are at a record high and the latest UN charade in Qatar showed the paucity of internationally-coordinated efforts to stem the flow.

Can the labour movement provide a way out of this impasse? Räthzel and Uzzell’s book makes a good case that it can. This impressive collection of essays from across the globe, reflects a potential for authentic international labour movement solidarity. Contributors from Sweden, South Korea, Spain and South Africa are alongside those from Australia, the United States and Brazil. As well as the focus on energy, there are wider contributions taking in transport and agriculture, making a strong case for the synthesis of organised labour and nature, what they call “environmental labour studies”.

Cock and Lambert argue that “the logic of capital accumulation is a singular process, which destroys jobs and nature, requiring a movement in defence of both, founded on political rejection of uncontrolled, financially driven, private equity accumulation”. US Steelworker president Leo Gerard is quoted saying that “much of the pollution from production is born out of the same greed and need for ever-increasing profits that leads to the exploitation of workers”. Workers have a clear interest as often the first victims of environmental impacts and usually the hardest hit, with the fewest resources to adapt. This is true whether workers live in the Ganges delta or in New Orleans.

The power of workers’ ecology is also gargantuan. The international waged working class appears to have at least doubled in size in the last three decades. Since 1978, China’s waged working class has tripled, growing from 120 million to 350 million. As Rossman points out in the book, there are 1.3 billion people employed in agriculture (half the global labour force), including some 450 million waged workers. He shows that big business agriculture is one of the most dangerous greenhouse gas emitters and this immediately affects the health and well-being of workers and small farmers in agriculture. He concludes that the struggle for workers’ rights is an indispensable part of the struggle to mitigate climate change.

GREEN JOBS

The essays by Burgmann and by Snell and Fairbrother argue that the perspective of green jobs can overcome the jobs versus environment dilemma, by offering unions and workers a way to embrace climate change measures without fearing unemployment.

Uzzell and Räthzel argue that there are a number of ambiguities in the demand for green jobs. First, green jobs are not necessarily, well paid, safe, and secure jobs. There is a need to question “the relationship between green jobs and just jobs, to examine the taken-for-granted growth perspective, to take the relationship between different production sectors within a country and globally into account, and to rethink the system of production that has led to climate change”. The editors make the profound point that when unions defend jobs at the expense of nature, “they are at the same time defending the relations of production (the private appropriation of nature) under which they are themselves subordinated”. The key question is, “whether a demand for green jobs leads to ‘shallow reforms’ or whether it transcends the present forms of production”.

Just transition has become the new mantra for trade unions in environmental politics. Originating in the US with the UAW auto workers’ union and the OCAW energy union (led by Tony Mazzocchi), just transition has now become the

Eventually US unions opposed the Keystone XL pipeline.

overarching synthetic articulation for trade union stances on climate change. Snell and Fairbrother argue that just transition emphasises “a position of procedural fairness whereby justice must not only be achieved as an outcome but it must also be reflected in the means used to realise these outcomes”.

Rosemberg fears the risk of appropriation and/or depoliticisation of the just transition idea, based on her experience representing unions at successive climate talks. Whilst the term has been accepted in UN forums, it has scarcely been put into practice and may simply become filleted, like “sustainable development”, into a nebulous cliché. Rossman argues that just transition has two shortcomings. First “it can underestimate the extent to which current technologies are embedded in power relations that require more than rational arguments to transform. Technology is never socially neutral”. Second, the just transition approach “tends to overlook that rights are never granted, but always fought for”.

EXTREME ENERGY

Probably the most powerful chapter in the book is Sweeney’s account of US trade unions and extreme energy, focused on the TransCanada Keystone XL oil pipeline.

Extreme energy technologies such as tar sands and fracking threaten a “second coming” for fossil-based power and the Keystone XL case “draws attention to the very real danger of an energy system emerging that is not only far from clean, but even dirtier and more damaging than the system based on conventional fossil fuels”. When plans to extend the pipeline were announced in 2008, four unions including the Teamsters signed agreements with TransCanada, while most Canadian unions opposed it.

Sweeney argues that “union support for the approval of Keystone XL is hugely damaging to the US labour movement and to efforts of unions everywhere — including at the global level — to promote climate protection and sustainable development and to build alliances with other social movements”. Trade unions’ support for Keystone XL “reflects an explicit industry-labour partnership designed to promote an extreme energy agenda with a public message built around the issue of jobs and energy independence”.

Sweeney argues that “organised labour cannot present itself as a progressive social movement while at the same time siding with extreme energy corporations against those in the communities whose lives and livelihoods are jeopardised by these dirty energy developments”. Unions “cannot afford to alienate its allies in the environmental and climate justice movements who share labour’s broad social objectives and have been actively engaged in the battles to protect workers’

rights and collective bargaining”. The Transport Workers Union and the Amalgamated Transit Union eventually became the first US unions to publicly oppose Keystone XL. Last year, when the federal government denied the permit to TransCanada, the steelworkers, CWA and SEIU issued a statement saying the president had “acted wisely” in rejecting the pipeline.

The book also includes a sharp but rather intemperate critique of the labour movement by green academic John Barry, who recognises the progressive potential of unions but dismisses much of the record. He states: “we have to also recognise that much like the broad ‘labour movement’, and the traditional political left (socialism and social democracy), trades unionism has also become a force supporting and promoting unsustainability”. This is evident in “its uncritical embracing of orthodox economic growth (and capital accumulation) and consequently an overly narrow focus on issues around formal employment, pay and conditions”. He cites union support for “coal production, nuclear power and airport expansion”. He believes the trades union movement has become “effectively depoliticised and divorced from a vision of its purpose as the fundamental transformation of social, economic and political structures within society”.

While this critique teases out some of the worst aspects of contemporary trade unionism, it conflates varied strands of the labour movement and offers no strategic way forward. Most unions have never had a vision of socialism, never mind one that is ecologically grounded. However Marxists certainly have had that kind of vision, stretching back to the founders and including William Morris, Bebel and the German SPD, and the Bolsheviks. The vision of socialism is not about economic growth for its own sake, but nor is it the dire poverty implied by steady state green economics. Rather production for collective social need, with democratic control over publicly owned resources and the massive expansion of free time, would ensure the most efficient metabolism (ecologically and economically) of society within nature.

POLITICS

Hendriksson rightly argues that the climate question is “not about technology. It is about politics, in other words, the class struggle”.

Uzzell and Räthzel believe that this could be a critical moment in trade union history — “a moment of danger” where unions recognise that addressing climate change “could be decisive for their future, not only in terms of the effects it will have on jobs, but also for the impact it could have on international solidarity”. Climate change could trigger new forms of solidarity, what might be called “climate solidarity” between workers across all kinds of boundaries and borders. However they echo the concern by some Southern unions that Northern climate change policies are simply protectionist smokescreens to safeguard jobs and Northern industries.

Some of the authors in the book “critically advocate the need for so-called reformist strategies by unions to develop viable perspectives out of the climate change threat”. Others have more doubts and “see reformism as a potential threat to effective policies that can halt climate change”. There are debates between “weak” and “strong” versions of ecological modernisation, but Uzzell and Räthzel advocate a more radical concept of “revolutionary reformism”. By this they mean that “labour movements have to present alternatives within the day to day political agendas with the aim of improving the situation for workers and the society now”. They attribute the idea to Rosa Luxemburg, although it also bears resemblance to the concept of transitional demands developed by the early Comintern. But the basic approach, fighting for reforms without losing sight of the wider social transformation, is the right one.

Demands around climate justice and united fronts built around climate solidarity do provide the framework for engagement between the labour movement and environmental activists.

A revamped and renovated labour movement is capable of both renewing itself and transforming the climate movement. The book is a valuable addition to this epoch-making project.

SWP's "good old days?"

By Martin Thomas

Oppositionist writers in the SWP, in their polemics against the SWP's current regime, are sometimes harking back to the ideas of the SWP (then called IS) before 1968, as summarised by two texts by Tony Cliff: *Trotsky on substitutionism* (1960) and *Rosa Luxemburg* (actually also 1960, but usually attributed to 1959).

Both those texts are still kept in circulation by the SWP (though the Luxemburg one in a bowdlerised edition), and neither has been thoroughly criticised by any authoritative SWP writer.

It is easy to see why SWP oppositionists find them attractive. In them Cliff advocates a socialist organisation which is easy-going and entirely open about its internal debates.

The forerunners of AWL, the Workers' Fight group (1967-8 and 1971-5) and the Trotskyist Tendency in IS (1968-71), thought those old Cliffite ideas were false. We still think them false.

Although the SWP's regime has evolved over the years, and reached its current level of "commandism" and Central-Committee-controlled monologue only well on into the 1980s, it is based on principles common to the pre-1968 conceptions. And some axioms of the current regime — the ban on "permanent factions" (i.e. the imposition of an arbitrary time-limit on factions); the rule that factions must always dissolve after a conference; and the rule that dissident revolutionary socialists can be expelled for having "too big" political differences, or for being a "secret faction" — were instituted very soon after 1968, in a series of expulsions between 1971 and 1975.

Both now and then, the SWP conception is based on a neglect, or downgrading, of struggle on the ideological front, and a consequent belief that slogans must always (in the SWP catchphrase) "fit the mood".

The SWP today is of course willing to run counter to majority working-class opinion on issues. The IS before 1968 would do that, too. But such stances are always based on an argument that the contrarian position nevertheless "fits the mood" of some "militant minority", and will help SWP, or IS, recruit that militant minority.

Both now and then, the SWP conception is based on a concept of "Leninism" as administrative centralisation. Between 1959 and 1968, IS was a small group with little ability or zest for initiatives, and had to compete on the left with a larger group (Gerry Healy's SLL) much more capable of initiative.

"Cliffism" has bowdlerised the ideas of both Lenin and Luxemburg

IS adopted the "Luxemburgist" doctrine as a way of advertising itself as more easy-going, less scary, less tense than the SLL.

From about 1963 onwards, the SLL increasingly marginalised itself by sectarian bluster. IS grew. Cliff shifted to advocate "democratic centralism", first simply as a more effective way of organising a group larger than the old IS discussion circle, and then rationalising it a bit more in a pamphlet on the French events of May-June 1968. As IS-SWP came to be able to take some initiatives, it moved towards much the same regime as the old SLL.

TRADITION

In 1969 Workers' Fight (the Trotskyist Tendency) saw ourselves as continuing the political tradition of the US Trotskyist leader James P Cannon.

We have learned things since then, including that some of the ideas we took from "Cannonite" stock were false. For example, we were wrong to believe Cannon's story that the demand in 1940 by the minority of the US Trotskyist movement, led by Max Shachtman, to be able to express itself publicly on issues like Stalin's invasion of Finland, was a matter of "reneging" and "capitulating" people wanting to appeal to "the general public". In fact Shachtman's group was more intransigent in politically dissociating from US bourgeois democracy during World War Two than Cannon's group was.

Our custom, even in our "Cannonite" days, was to give our big political debates among ourselves expression in our public press. We think that was right, and since 1995 have written the custom into our constitution.

The 1969 article's criticism (right-hand column) of Cliff's 1960 statement that "all discussion on basic issues of policy should be... in the open press" was not without substance, though. Cliff justified on the basis that it would enable "the mass of workers [to] take part in the discussion, put pressure on the party..."

It was demagogic fantasy, in 1960 or even 1969, that "the mass of workers" would follow debate in the IS-SWP press, and Cliff's underlying thought here was that a revolutionary organisation should always keep in tune, ideologically, with "the mass of workers", or at least, realistically, with the "militant minority".

There are drawbacks to carrying a revolutionary organisation's debates in public. It can, for example, lead to a custom of dissenters not pursuing their debate rigorously within the organisation, but instead being satisfied with a declaration in the paper or on the web which may have about it some of the character of a signal to a chosen public: "Look at me! I'm not as bad as these hard Trotskyists!"

On balance, however, those drawbacks are smaller than those associated with pressing minorities to pretend to agree when in fact they don't, with feeding the readers of the organisation's press only a very filtered version of the arguments behind the organisation's stances, or with putting minorities who feel strongly in a position where they will be inclined to split just in order to get a chance to express themselves.

Battle on the ideological front

By Sean Matgamna

Cliff said he had always advocated a revolutionary party, and had in fact always been right on the issue. Some of us remembered differently.

However, the important question was... whether or not a real turn had been made by Cliff and company towards the building of a revolutionary organisation after the model of Bolshevism...

Democratic centralism was of course impossible given the level of consciousness and commitment in the group. It was possible (just!) that the leadership intended to carry out a campaign to transform the members and methods of work. This question has in the last four months been answered decisively — in the negative...

A merely formal structural change had taken place in the group, necessitated in the eyes of the leaders on technical grounds (1,200 to organise!...) and presented in their usual style in a suitable demagogic sauce as "Leninist democratic centralism".

But Leninism is much more than an organisational formula...

Cliff in the *Substitutionism* article reaches conclusions on the role of Marxists which are legitimate only on (1) a conception of a mechanistic development of the whole class; and (2) complete abandonment of any conception of Bolshevik-type leadership.

"The role of Marxists is to generalise the living evolving experience of the class struggle, to give a conscious expression to the instinctive drive of the working class to reorganise on a socialist basis".

Merely an expression? Not the development of the permanent consciousness of the class with the concomitant duty to lead? [...] The conclusion could only be (and it was for IS) passivity, a variety of the "blackboard socialism" model, with its casual whisper in the ear.

This line, which simply removes any leading role for a revolutionary party as conceived by Leninists (as opposed to the "technical" party that Cliff acknowledges) is only rational on the basis of a vulgar evolutionary conception of a maturation of the class. It excludes sharp breaks and jumps in class development, the points where the activity of an organised Leninist combat party can be decisive. It ignores the fact that the working class en masse only sporadically reaches a peak of revolutionary activity.

In practice the line in 1959-60 said simply: wait around in the Labour Party.

Cliff: "The party has to be subordinated to the whole". He might as well have used the word "identical" here. He advocates extreme open discussion of every issue before the mass of the class — without qualification. "The freedom of discussion which exists in the factory meeting, which aims at unity of action after decisions are taken, should apply to the revolutionary party. This means" — why? the party is not the class — "that all discussions on basic issues of policy should be discussed in the light of day: in the open press. Let the mass of the workers take part in the discussion, put pressure on the party, its apparatus and leadership".

Thus the party is seen not as a freely selected grouping of opinion, but as the forum of the class...

The ability to combat bourgeois and reactionary ideology in the class is impossible if the party is to be open to pressure from it: do we allow the dockers when they march for Enoch Powell to put pressure on us?

But then, Cliff lost sight completely of the battle on the ideological front. This battle must be fought, or the party as such will cease to exist.

• From *The Politics of IS*, Easter 1969. Full text: www.workersliberty.org/is-1969

SWP calls special conference

The SWP [Socialist Workers Party] Central Committee has not expelled the opposition, but instead called a special conference for 10 March.

This follows the launching of a "moderate" faction on 9 March. Many prominent SWP old-timers and writers back the faction. Though its other demands are vague, it calls for Martin Smith no longer to be a paid public representative of the SWP, and opposes expulsion of the more militant oppositionists.

The more outspoken SWP opposition says it will join the faction and work within it.

When the CC got a clear majority at the SWP national committee on 3 February for motions authorising it to expel oppositionists, it looked as if the CC would move quickly to expulsions and a split. Evidently the CC did not feel strong enough to do that.

The oppositionists say that the calling of a special conference at such short notice is a move to squash the opposition, and to cow the moderates by using against them the SWP rule that factions must dissolve after conference.

Whether the SWP CC can get away with that is another matter. Its authority in the organisation is diminished.

How the Con-Dems are attacking our legal rights

Jonathan Gray, an employment lawyer acting for trade unions and their members, spoke to *Solidarity* about the government's changes to workers' rights legislation.

Since taking power, the Coalition government has been attacking workers' rights and workers' access to justice. The government justifies its actions on the grounds of reducing "red tape" and the regulatory "burden" (their words) on businesses. When balancing protecting workers and protecting profits, the emphasis appears to be heavily in favour of protecting profits at the expense of worker's rights.

The key changes that have already taken place, or are coming, are:

- Employees employed from 6 April 2012 onwards will now need two years of continuous employment (rather than one year, as previously) before they have any right to take an employer to an Employment Tribunal for unfair dismissal. Low paid workers, many of whom are on short term or temporary contracts, already have limited employment protection and this further erodes the protection available to them and other workers.

- Judges in Employment Tribunal hearings are now allowed to sit alone when deciding unfair dismissal cases — previously an employee would have an automatic right for the case to be heard by an industrial jury consisting of a judge and two lay members (one from the union side and the other from the employer side). This created a degree of balance which is now at risk.

TRIBUNALS

- **Employment Tribunals have been given the power to require employees who are bringing claim to (a) make a payment of up to £1,000 as a deposit before they can proceed to a hearing and (b) order the employee who has brought a claim that was unsuccessful to pay legal costs of up to £20,000.**

Legal costs orders could be made in the past in limited circumstances. That possibility has been increased significantly. It will clearly act as a deterrent to workers seeking to enforce their rights.

- The Equality Act (which consolidated discrimination law into one Act) increased the protection to employees in that it provided that employers' duties to protect employees from harassment extended to third party harassment (e.g. from customers). However, the Con-Dems have announced that this extension is to be repealed. A female bar worker sexually harassed by a male customer on more than one occasion will no longer be able to require protection from their employer.

- In discrimination cases, there is an entitlement to require an employer to respond to discrimination questionnaires. This was extremely useful in helping to establish if an employer had been treating workers differently. However, the Con-Dems have announced that the discrimination questionnaire entitlement is to be repealed. This will make bringing discrimination claims even harder. It is very rare in discrimination cases to have a clear admission of guilt. The questionnaire process was a valuable tool to obtain supporting evidence.

- From 6 April 2013, the period during which employers are required to consult with their workforces about collective redundancies involving 100 or more employees is to be halved from 90 to 45 days. In mass redundancy situations involving a 100 of more employees, particularly where the redundancies affect different job types in different ways within the group, 45 days will not be sufficient time for the unions and/or employee representatives to have meaningful consultation on the issues with a view to saving jobs. This will

allow employers to fast-track mass redundancies.

- From July 2013, it will be necessary for workers to pay a fee before they can bring an Employment Tribunal case. Since the mid 1960s, there has been a free access employment tribunal system to ensure that workers had a mechanism to protect their rights without regard to their means or financial circumstances. Under the new fee scheme, a worker bringing a claim for unfair dismissal could have to pay an initial issue fee of £200 and then a further fee of £1,000 if they want to have a hearing.

At a time when a worker has already lost their job and may not have found other work, the need to find such fees will clearly act as a massive disincentive to bring a claim and will be prohibitive for most. Wealthy employees will still of course have full access, as they will not find it difficult to find this level of fees. As a famous judge said ironically at the turn of the last century: "The law is open to all — just like the Ritz hotel".

Employment Tribunal statistics for the year from 1 April 2011 have shown that in claims for unfair dismissal, only 21% of successful cases led to compensation being awarded. Where compensation is awarded, the average award is only £4,560. Essentially, a worker bringing an Employment Tribunal claim will now need to consider whether to gamble £1,200 after losing their job for the remote (1 in 5) chance of winning compensation which on average is only £4,560. Added to this is the risk the Tribunal could order legal costs, if the case is unsuccessful, of up to £20,000.

- Chancellor George Osborne has announced that he intends to allow employers to offer to buy off employees' employment rights in exchange for issuing shares to them. Bearing in mind the obvious inequality in bargaining position at the time that an employer offers a job subject to the employee agreeing to give up their employment rights for shares, this proposal also creates the opportunity for tax avoidance by higher paid employees who could give up their statutory employment rights in return for shares worth up to £50,000 (untaxed — CGT free on sale) whilst still having the same or greater employment rights incorporated into their written contracts of employment.

- The government is consulting on removing service provision change protections under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE). This

change would result in employees outsourced, brought in house, or moved to a different contract being unable to rely upon TUPE to preserve their existing terms and conditions of employment. It may be that the motivation behind this is to make it easier for local councils to outsource direct council employees on lesser terms and conditions when councils look to cut their annual budgets.

- In a separate attack on the rights of injured workers, the Con-Dem government is seeking to reduce the protection available to workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The Health and Safety at Work Act provides that employees can claim compensation from employers if they are injured due to breach of workplace health and safety regulations by their employer without necessarily needing to prove that the employer had been negligent. The Act simply followed established legal practice dating back to 1898.

- In a move that will put back the legal position by many years, the government is pushing through legislation (the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill) which will remove the right of injured workers to claim compensation for injuries resulting from breaches by their employer of health and safety regulations — instead, compensation will only be paid if the employee can prove negligence by the employer. This will leave many injured workers uncompensated even though the employer is proved to have broken health and safety regulations.

MISTAKEN

- **The government appears to be proceeding on the clearly mistaken belief that cutting what they regard as "red tape" and what the rest of us consider basic standards of health and safety and employment protection for workers will miraculously cause the economy to grow again — whilst at the same time, completely ignoring the effects of their continued austerity programme.**

- On a separate front, the government announced in early 2012 that it intended to change the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to exclude more people from being able to claim and reduce the awards of compensation. Shortly before the proposed changes, and in the light of continuing criticism by trade unions, victims' groups and others, the government backed down at the last minute and agreed not to make the changes — despite the Deputy Justice Minister having defended the proposed changes in Parliament only a week earlier!

To resist and push back these reforms, unions need to facilitate more debate in mainstream media. They should also consider a challenge under the Human Rights regime to the potential restricting of access to justice in the Employment Tribunal system caused by the legislative changes, and consider a challenge to the European Court regarding the proposed changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act.

It is also critical to fight to get the Labour Party to make a clear commitment on these issues if it wins the next election. At present, Labour has not committed to reversing any of these legislative changes.

Positive demands for pro-worker legislation would include:

- Maintaining the collective consultation time periods as they currently are, if not extend them.

- Reinstatement of discrimination questionnaires.

- As a minimum, to reinstate the one year minimum period of employment to claim unfair dismissal. However, the extension of full rights from day one of employment should be the ultimate goal.

- Remove the need for fees in the Employment Tribunal system, which has been free to use by workers since the first Industrial Tribunals since the mid 1960s.

- **Oppose changes to Health & Safety laws.**

NHS: stop terms and conditions surrender!

By a health worker

On 6 February, health union Unison's Service Group Executive agreed to accept a number of attacks to Agenda for Change (AfC, the national terms and conditions for NHS staff) in a gambit straight out of the concession bargaining school of trade unionism.

Negotiations over AfC Change have been overshadowed by a number of Trusts in the South West and in the North East threatening to opt out of national bargaining and impose their own pay,

terms and conditions. In response to this the unions have negotiated some small but significant concessions, trying to make AfC more attractive to these cost-cutting employers. The main changes involve abolishing unsocial hours pay for people on sickness absence and tightening up arrangements for incremental pay progression.

However, they have agreed to these proposals without securing any guarantees that these concessions will be enough to tempt the renegade employers back into national bargaining. The argument

Will Unison leaders surrender NHS workers' terms and conditions without a fight?

goes that if we can hang onto some husk of AfC until the next election then hopefully Labour will get into power and save us. But there are no cast-iron guarantees from Labour either!

In any case, the strategy does not seem to be working. Less than a week after Unison announced, Chris Hopson, head of the bosses' federation Foundation Trust Network, representing 200 NHS

employers, said it was "time to consider setting pay regionally or on a trust-by-trust basis."

Ever since the pensions dispute, the union's ability to deliver effective national strikes has been in doubt. Instead of trying to organise action and turn this situation around, the leadership trade away our terms and conditions and preach that salvation will come with a Labour government.

Unison officials made a big play of how they organised a widespread consultation with members before agreeing this deal. They didn't. It would be

surprising if 1% of the membership understood what was going on – let alone had enough information to make an informed decision or had a forum to voice that opinion.

If they are unable to organise effective strike action, then at very least we should expect the union to use its considerable resource to broadcast timely, honest information to the members. We are on the cusp of losing national bargaining whilst sending a clear signal to the employer that we are weak and unprepared to fight.

Don't mourn, organise!

Civil service fightback



By a civil servant

Ballot papers have been sent out to 250,000 members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) working in the civil service and associated bodies. The ballot is for discontinuous strike action and action short of a strike.

The dispute is about pay, job security, pensions, and terms and conditions. A series of regional briefings have been held in the run-up to the ballot to ask reps what sort of action, and how much of it, will members support. Feedback from the briefings suggests all is not well.

Some reps have said the pay claim (5% or £1,200 — whichever is greater) is unrealistic. This probably just reflects the low confidence of members. Others have, quite legitimately, asked what has changed between May and now. In May, the PCS Conference overwhelmingly rejected a motion from supporters of the PCS Independent Left which stated that "(PCS) should seek to build public sector trade union unity in defence of our rights whilst insisting

on PCS's right to fight as an independent union in defence of its members and without having to wait many weeks and months for other trade unions to join us in action." The conference preferred instead the leadership motion which said that PCS could not fight the government on our own and win.

There is also now an acceptance by the PCS leadership that we cannot persist with the tactic of occasional one day strikes if we are to wring concessions out of the government on issues such as pay, pensions, and job security. It has been pointed out in briefings that we are balloting members on a "programme" of action without spelling out what that programme is.

Some departments have now published the results of their review of staff terms and conditions. Whilst detrimental changes will be introduced for new staff, particularly around paid sick leave, current staff will have their terms and conditions protected. Activists will need to find ways of mobilising members to fight on the issues they may feel more keenly.

It is important that activists seek to secure the biggest possible yes/yes vote on the biggest possible turn out.

Workers' solidarity in Australia

Workers of the world

Solidarity spoke to Emma Kerin, Communications Officer of the National Union of Workers in Australia, about class struggle down under. Emma has been involved in the campaign to defend victimised trade unionist Bob Carnegie (see page 12).

While there are obviously industry specific issues such as public sector cuts and privatisation, or health and safety for truck drivers and care workers, or being able to earn a living wage for minimum wage earners: there are two key issues affecting Australian workers across industries.

The first is insecure employment models; whether it's labour hire and other third party arrangements in

warehousing and distribution, sham contracting in construction, fixed term contracts for teachers and university staff, cash-in-hand work through dodgy contractors in poultry or cleaning, or outsourcing in the public sector, all these employment models shift risk from employers onto workers, with very harmful affects on workers' lives and their communities.

The second issue for Australian workers is the ongoing deterioration of workers' rights to collectively organise. Secondary boycott laws from the 1970s have been continually built upon to limit workers' ability to show solidarity, which is really the only economic power we have in a democracy.

When unions have restrictions put on them to limit their power, and downgrade any real economic democracy, workers have two choices; to abide by laws that take away their

democratic right to organise, or to use the only tool they have and show solidarity with one another so that their rights are not swept up in a race to the bottom.

In Australia, workers can only apply to take industrial action during the bargaining process of their Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (typically once every three years).

STRENGTHEN
If workers are forced to take industrial action, other workers are not allowed to strengthen their arm by taking solidarity action.

However, when those workers are on strike their employer has every right to bring in secondary labour to continue production. Contradictions such as these abound. But how we work affects how we live, and workers will continue to have no choice but to fight for their rights with

the only tool they have – collective organisation and solidarity.

Essentially union solidarity is based on the wider community supporting a group of workers when they are in struggle. In some senses trying to break down our ability to show solidarity has actually decentralised the process, so that workers supporting other workers is happening more and more on a grass roots basis and not necessarily at the say so of a trade union. Some trade unions are likewise organising more and more on a community level. I think this is happening all the time. The key remains solidarity, because that is still where our strength lies.

And we must be able to support those activists, whether from the community or a trade union, who step into leadership roles.

HMV jobs fight

Young trade unionists have launched a campaign to save jobs at the high-street retailer after administrator Hilco announced 66 stores would close.
More: tinyurl.com/hmvjobs

More industrial news online

- Lecturers to strike against sackings — tinyurl.com/halesowenstrike
- More battles on the Tube — tinyurl.com/tubebattles

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Australian construction workers strike to support Bob Carnegie

Construction workers downed tools and walked off sites in Australia on 11-13 February to support victimised trade unionist Bob Carnegie, as his trial began in Brisbane.

Bob is being pursued by Abigroup (a subsidiary of multinational construction/property giant Lend Lease) for contempt of court charges and damages because of his role in a successful dispute by construction workers on the Queensland Children's Hospital site in Brisbane from August-October 2012.

His trial began on Monday 11 February, and saw construction workers, in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Brisbane, strike in solidarity with him, attend rallies, and mount a trade-union guard of honour as he entered court. Dock workers in Sydney also struck.

With the trial continuing, Abigroup have already dropped 34 of their 54 charges, and the verdict announcement has been delayed.

Support has arrived from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Trades Union Confederation (ITUC), as well as dozens of labour movement organisations from Australia and around the world.

British supporters leafleted the public about the case outside the Broadgate Tower, Lend Lease's most prominent construction project in the UK (picture, bottom right).

• For the latest, see bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com

Mayor thwarted in fire cuts battle

By Jack Horner

The campaign against fire stations in London took a further step forward this week after the fire authority again voted against proposed cuts, in defiance of Mayor Boris Johnson's plans.

Johnson wants to close 12 fire stations, remove 18 fire engines and slash 520 frontline firefighter posts in an attempt to save £45 million.

On 21 January the LFEP board, made up of elected councillors as well as mayoral appointees, voted 9-8 against the mayor's plans. Despite the democratic decision, Johnson instructed fire chief Ron Dobson to ignore the vote and begin a public consultation exercise on the cuts.

At an emergency meeting of the authority on Monday 11 February called in response to the mayor's intervention, the commissioner conceded that he did not have the legal power to act on the mayor's instruction without the approval of the authority. Instead he recommended that the authority delegate the required powers to enable him to consult on the cuts. However the majority of authority members voted not to accept the recommendation, meaning that the mayor's cuts are again blocked.

Paul Embery, FBU's regional secretary for London said: "Authority members did the right thing and we applaud their stance. Hostility to the mayor's planned cuts is growing by the day. It's about time the mayor grasped the nettle and abandoned his reckless plans." The vote puts the spotlight back on Johnson, but he is unlikely to back off. He wants to trim council tax bills to forward his political ambitions in the Tory party and is not fussy about

where cuts are made to fund it. Central government fire grants have also been cut.

This makes it all the more important to organise campaign groups around every threatened fire station, drawing in local people and supporters. A combination of local direct action and political campaigning can force the Tories to back down.

It is necessary to raise the prospect of industrial action to keep fire stations open. Work-ins, occupations and other forms of direct action, that keep providing the service but under workers' control, make sense. This means the directly-affected firefighters can shape their own destiny, while local people can participate while still getting their vital service.

However there is a way to go before such activity can be organised successfully. The first steps towards support groups are being taken in some places, but the response so far is uneven.

Firefighters need to reach out to the labour movement and to local anti-cuts and NHS campaigns, while activists and socialists need to show solidarity with firefighters.

The untold scandal behind horse burgers

By Jay Edge

The horsemeat scandal is a scandal, but not for the reasons they say. It's not some "rogue trader" in Poland or Romania, or France who we should be taking a closer look at.

The nice people from Tesco, Findus etc. are "appalled" at what has happened to them and their prey... err, sorry — I mean customers.

The companies will be happy that attention is being focussed on horse meat production because it takes attention away from the problems of processed food — the legal additives in burgers such as cultured protein, ground up chicken feathers, nitrates, di-glycerides of fatty acids.

Plus all the trimmings. That's not the nice stuff you get at Christmas with your turkey. It's the bits that are trimmed off the carcass at the abattoir and would otherwise be incinerated if brokers weren't casting around to see what they can get for the price being dictated.

The problem here lies with the constant drive from food conglomerates and multi-nationals for short term profit. They offload their supply chain to brokers; their production to a sub-contractor and so it goes on.

This is not only about getting a cheaper price and making higher profit but is also explicitly about reducing the risk of being sued. Findus can take the moral high ground if something blows up in their face.

Along the supply chain there is scope to drive up profits

by driving down wages and conditions for workers.

We can't solve this by forming an orderly queue outside our local butchers. It is much better meat there, but it's not all good news. Other multi-nationals — who make sheep and cattle feeds (and horse, no doubt) — with by-products from processing human food. When this goes back into the food chain — in the meat from these animals — we get a double whammy of previously-processed food in our processed food. I think this is where the "two for one" offer originated from!

Only proper wages and conditions throughout the food industry and workers' control of food production — from field to fork — can ensure healthy, safe eating.