

For a  
workers'  
government

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

**Down  
with  
UKIP!**



**Up with solidarity!**

**Black and white, migrant and local,  
religious or not: workers unite!**

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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



### We stand for:

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

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# NHS staff to strike again

By Todd Hamer

Health unions have announced a further four hour strike on 24 November in their ongoing pay dispute.

Since 2010 the NHS has been starved of £20 billion. By 2020 the gap between funding and necessary expenditure will be around £50 billion. Last month the new Chief Executive of the NHS Simon Stevens made a spurious claim that with an extra £8 billion investment he could redesign the service and make £22 billion savings by 2020.

If we do not win a decent pay settlement and build a union movement capable of

defending our already much degraded terms and conditions, then we will have helped speed on the end of the NHS as a free state-of-the-art health service.

But the current strategy of the unions is risible. So far the campaign has involved a four hour strike, four days of not doing unpaid overtime (so-called "action short of a strike") and a pause of six weeks. Now another four hour strike and more appeals to stop doing unpaid work for a few days.

The unelected bureaucrats who run the unions believe the pay claim can be won through winning public support. That's important, especially in an election



NHS staff on strike on 13 October

year. But it is not as important as the mass withdrawal of labour or more effective at concentrating the minds of the bosses.

**The rank-and-file must**

**start to push for an escalation. A serious strategy to win could encourage many more health workers to strike and become part of the movement to save the NHS.**

## Outsourced hospital staff fight back

Outsourced workers — cleaners, caterers, switch-board workers, seamstresses, porters and others — employed by ISS at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, South London, have struck for the same pay and conditions as directly employed workers. One of the reps spoke to *Solidarity*.

**We plan two more strikes days in November, after our strike on 8 October, dates to be confirmed soon. More support and solidarity would be very welcome.**

In March the full-time GMB officer who works with us asked us if there was any campaign we wanted to start at the hospital.

We raised the issue that outsourced workers we don't receive the full pay,

overtime and other rights that we would if we were directly employed.

We worked with the GMB to organise a recruitment campaign such as an open day for ISS staff to come and talk to us. We put out flyers about the issues and ISS management called us in. They told us that if we want this, we needed a "tripartite meeting" with us and the NHS Trust. They wished us good luck! We chased the Trust but they stopped responding; after a while it was clear we were being palmed off.

Once we called a strike for 8 October, we were asked to cancel and meet them. Our strike committee said we'd cancel depending on what offer they put on the table. We gave them until 10pm on Tuesday 7th, but there was no offer so we went ahead.

There are 380-plus staff employed by ISS at QE, when we began we had less than 40. We're now up to over 240.

Our strike definitely had an impact. They brought in people from all over the country, but they weren't trained to do our jobs. We had a big presence outside the hospital, with several pickets, and now members are asking when our next strike day will be. For most people this is a new thing.

We've set up a strike committee with open meetings every other week. We usually get 20 to 30 members along. It's a democratic set up.

Unite at Lewisham Hospital [which is part of the same NHS trust as QE] have been supportive. Their branch secretary came down for our picket lines and we've got plans to go over

and speak to their members about doing a similar campaign. Unfortunately Unite have just ignored us.

I think all jobs should be taken back in house. We've got three contractors at QE. Outsourcing and PFI is how these companies make money — it's private profit rather than going to the NHS. Of course if we had NHS wages and conditions it wouldn't be so attractive for them.

Messages of support are good and donations are much appreciated. Our members are not paid at a lot and some people don't work many hours, so striking is not easy financially.

**Also, people should feel free to come down to our picket lines.**

● Messages of solidarity: [nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk](mailto:nadine.houghton@gmb.org.uk)

## Solidarity with Iranian women facing attack!

By Gemma Short

Women in the central Iranian city of Isfahan have been attacked with acid because of the way they were dressed.

The official press reports four women were attacked, but some put the number as high as 15.

This attack comes as Iranian government is discussing measures to address "bad hijab". Proposals would give confidence to the "morality police" and encourage semi-official mili-

tias to harass women.

Regime officials claim the attacks are unconnected. However the attackers all used a motorcycle and many litres of acid, suggesting a connection. Paradoxically regime officials also claim that "foreign and Zionist intelligence agencies" were helping the attackers!

Thousands protested outside Isfahan's Justice Department on 22 October condemning the attacks and calling for safety for women on the street. A similar

protest happened in Tehran.

The regime is unwilling to prosecute militias that act in a vigilante manner. They are useful to the regime. These militias act within the framework and environment created by the regime's attitude to women, and alongside official state harassment of women by the "morality police".

On 1 November Ghoncheh Ghavami, a British-Iranian woman, was sentenced to a year in prison for watching a men's volleyball game. She was charged

with "propaganda against the state", a catch-all crime used by the regime against dissidents.

She is being held in the notorious Evin prison and has been on hunger strike over her solitary confinement.

On 24 October the regime hanged Reyhaneh Jabbari, who was found guilty of the murder of a man who tried to rape her.

**Support women, secularists, workers and socialists fighting the Iranian regime!**

# A million march in Rome

By Hugh Edwards

**On Saturday 25 October up to a million protesters marched to Rome's Piazza San Giovanni in response to the call from CGIL trade-union leader Susanna Camusso to support her union's opposition to the coalition government of Democratic Party leader Matteo Renzi.**

It was largest mass demonstration in Italy for over a decade.

His government is in the final stages of introducing legislation to drastically worsen job-security conditions won 40 years ago in mass struggles.

It is the latest and most ruthless gamble by Italy's rulers to comprehensively deregulate the workplace and try to prove that Renzi can arrest the country's decline in the world market.

The millions on the streets may indicate that the rela-

tively easy ride so far for both Renzi and his two immediate predecessors, Mario Monte and Enrico Letta, may be over.

As well as the CGIL's usual base, the demo brought out hundreds of thousands of other workers, unemployed, "precariat", students, and people from hundreds of progressive campaigns all over the country.

There were thousands of migrant workers from a radical union, USB, whose members had struck nationally the day before; metalworkers from the threatened steelworks at Terni; and workers from the threatened Meridiana airline.

Camusso and her fellow bureaucrats must have hoped that the turnout and their radical rhetoric about the "possibility" of a one-day general strike might be enough to give Renzi pause before a scheduled meeting on Monday 27th.

The little aspiring Bonaparte didn't even bother to show, sending a message via his minions that "elected governments, on matters of legal reform, only negotiate with elected representatives".

Renzi is the leader of the Democratic Party, whose strength as an

agency of Italy's rulers has so far depended on the compliant attitude to it of the major trade-union confederations, especially the apparatus of CGIL, historically tied to Italy's Stalinist and post-Stalinist nomenklatura who still make up a key part of the Party.

The "social stability" which they have boasted of is but a cynical euphemism for the state of abject misery, despair and sense of political prostration that conniving bureaucratic inertia has inflicted on the workers and their families.

## SYMPTOMS

**The success of the crackpot populism of Grillo, the collapse of the membership of the Democratic Party itself, and the slow but relentless reemergence of the racist Northern League, are symptoms.**

When Renzi arrived in a populist "coup", as a self-trumpeting "moderniser", Fiat boss Marchionne said: "Now we can begin to get rid of the rubbish. That's why we have put him there".

This time the "rubbish" includes the trade-union apparatus, denounced by the prime minister in his propaganda to workers in the 95% of businesses not covered by Article 18's job-security provisions as "a conservative, corporative elite" indulging a "privileged minority of skilled workers who believe that they have the right to a fixed, permanent, secure

job". "No one has that right", he declared at a party convention on the Sunday following the march.

His scornful retort to Camusso has put the ball back in the court of the union leaders.

They continue to talk about a general strike, but say a decision will have to wait until the mid-November meeting of the executive.

Events came to something of a head on Wednesday 29th, when a further demonstration by the steelworkers of Terni was set upon by the riot squads.

Metalworkers' leader Landini, on the march but unscathed, announced two days of eight-hour strikes and regional demonstrations across the country. Camusso announced that she would be proposing similar action to her executive, but on different days.

Apart from the all-out action at Terni and Meridiana, there are now 150 disputes involving 150,000 workers in defence of jobs and imminent closures.

**The occupation of the steelworks at Terni and the call for support and similar action from other plants can be the basis for creating a new balance of forces in the workers' movement, capable of challenging and defeating the Renzi regime and posing the conditions for the birth of a movement capable of setting its sights on a class-wide battle for working-class political power.**

## Projecting alternatives

**The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which publishes *Solidarity*, met for our annual conference on 25-26 October.**

The main resolution on perspectives noted the possibility of a growing pay revolt in the next year. Real wages have been squeezed more and longer than ever before on record, and yet union organisation, for all its weaknesses, remains stable.

To contribute usefully if the pay revolt surges, and to hold the line if it doesn't, we must educate, train, and project ourselves as coherent, energetic advocates of class-struggle strategy and revolutionary socialist policy.

Hard-right forces like Ukip have gained political ground recently "because the official left has been utterly wretched, and because the radical left has too often been cowed. Too often radical left activists are submerged in detailed campaign or trade union work. Too often we opt for bland and limited messages for fear that more radical ideas will isolate us".

The main dispute on perspectives was about tactics in the May 2015 election period. The majority voted to encourage and help a socialist campaign to raise demands like "Tax the rich", "Reverse cuts", "Defend migrant rights", etc. within the broad labour movement effort to oust the Tories and get a Labour government.

The minority agreed on voting Labour in virtually all constituencies, but ad-

vocated a "Campaign for a Workers' Government" to "focus on a positive programme of measures which a workers' government would take up".

Observers from the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency, the Worker-communist Parties of Iraq and Kurdistan, and the French revolutionary socialist group L'Étincelle addressed the conference, and it also received greetings from Solidarity (USA), Marxist Tutum (Turkey), Lalit (Mauritius), Bob Carnegie of Workers' Liberty Australia, and Olivier Delbeke of Le Militant (France).

We debated and passed resolutions on the Middle East and Ukraine, as well as discussing reports and plans for our industrial, student, and feminist activity.

The conference debated what AWL will do in a clear in/out referendum on Britain quitting the European Union.

**We will advocate an "in" vote under slogans like "reduce borders, don't raise them", "support free movement across Europe", and "workers' unity against neo-liberal Europe, for a socialist Europe".**

• [bit.ly/awlconf](http://bit.ly/awlconf)



Protesters are angry at continued austerity

## US right stokes Ebola panic

By Tom Harris

**According to the Financial Times, more than 45% of Americans believe that they, or close friends and relatives, will contract the Ebola virus.**

Even if this were a rogue poll, that is a remarkably high percentage when one considers that only four people have tested positive for Ebola in the US, three of whom have since recovered.

Why are people so worried?

Firstly, the issue has become a deeply political one. President Obama has resisted calls to ban flights between the United States and the West African countries of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, where the Ebola out-

break is at its worst. It is unclear how a ban could be implemented, since all air traffic between the US and those countries is indirect — passengers change flights in Europe. Furthermore, Obama argues plausibly that such a ban would actually weaken the campaign to contain Ebola, since crucial US medical aid would be unable to reach the worst affected areas.

Republicans have accused Obama of playing fast and loose with public safety, while a number of Democratic senators have publicly repudiated the President's opposition to a travel ban. Political hacks have sought to stoke the panic even further.

Given that millions of Americans cannot afford private healthcare, it is easy to understand why many fear the

consequences of a serious outbreak.

It's just weird that they express that fear by backing Republicans who oppose even Obama's limited moves to extend health insurance.

And the odds of catching Ebola in America are still incredibly small. The disease can only be transferred from human to human through blood and bodily fluid. Its dramatic spread in West Africa has been made possible by the poverty, overcrowding, and scant health provision in the region.

**The best way to safeguard the American public against the risk of Ebola is not to close off air travel, but to provide serious financial and medical aid to the people of the affected African countries, on a long term basis.**

## Shame on you, Kyrgyzstan!



LGBT activists from the RMT union held a protest outside the Kyrgyzstan Embassy to protest at new anti-gay laws and to show solidarity with LGBT people in the Kyrgyz Republic



Beth Redmond on Sunday

# Unity: from wishing to doing

By Rhodri Evans

Socialist Worker on 14 October called for unity on the left. The two articles in SW, one an editorial and one a comment by Alex Callinicos, suggested that the call was really aimed at Scotland.

The SWP hopes to reknit the fragments of the old Scottish Socialist Party split apart by Tommy Sheridan (with the SWP's support!) in the row over his libel case.

But how to move from a wish to appear as people who want unity, to actual progress?

One SW article says that what's missing is "a strong voice challenging neoliberalism [in] the electoral field". A strong voice is possible, it says, because "the social democratic ideas that the SNP under Salmond has successfully appealed to are... strong in popular consciousness". They fail to find expression in a "strong voice" only because of "the extreme fragmentation of the radical left" and "the petty narcissism of our different projects".

So the job is to unite the left around SNP-style social democratic ideas? But another article (rightly) rejects Tommy Sheridan's call for the left to vote for the SNP in 2015.

One article argues for unity round the call that "the Yes campaign [for Scottish independence] should stay on the streets". Others argue (rightly) that socialists must move on to unite "yes" and "no" voters on class issues.

Elsewhere SW poses unity as unity of "the left outside the Labour Party", and mostly in "the electoral field". We had a united class-struggle socialist left in the electoral field in 2001-3 — the Socialist Alliance — and then the SWP trashed it in favour of vain hopes of getting rich quick through Respect.

The Socialist Party went for a different get-rich-quick effort with No2EU in 2009 and 2014, and the TUSC coalition between times.

Now left-of-Labour candidates rarely present themselves as boldly socialist, or much more than "anti-cuts", and yet they get much poorer votes than in 2001-3.

Solidarity and Workers' Liberty propose — and consistently work for — left unity in action to save the NHS, to resist cuts, to win free education, to aid the people of Kobane fighting ISIS, to support the right to self-determination of the people of Ukraine.

**At the same time we propose, and work for, dialogue and debate on the left, which could enable us to make progress on the many issues we disagree about, such as Scottish nationalism, political Islam, and Russian imperialism.**

**"Socialist Appeal" (SA), a linear descendant of the old Labour Party "Militant" tendency, has decided that its members in Scotland should quit the Labour Party and join the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP).**

Read our comment here: [bit.ly/10RXRL](http://bit.ly/10RXRL)



# "Let the Kurds die!"?

The Left



By Dan Katz

Over a thousand Kurdish people gathered in Trafalgar Square, London, on 1 November, in a day of international solidarity for the Kurds fighting ISIS (Daesh, "Islamic State") in Kobane.

Among the small number of people at the protest who were not Kurdish were a handful of representatives of the Socialist Party and SWP. Both these groups have a problem.

Both campaign to stop the US bombing which is currently helping the Kurds resist IS. They do not just do as *Solidarity* does — express no confidence in the US, refuse to endorse its campaign. They specifically campaign to stop the bombing, and often say that they do so because they oppose war (as if there would be no war with ISIS if the US abstained).

How did they explain their position to the Kurds in Trafalgar Square? They didn't attempt to. The SWP had placards calling for "Tories Out"; the SP gave out a leaflet of 600 words which failed to say clearly that they call for a stop to US bombing, or justify that.

## TWO LINES

**One organisation, two lines. One for the pro-US Kurds in Trafalgar Square; one for radical students and others dominated by knee-jerk anti-Americanism which they hope to recruit in Newcastle, Reading or Portsmouth.**

SPers argued the AWL supports imperialism; and that imperialist bombing in 2011 has made things worse for Libya, not better. Therefore the left should oppose western bombing in support of the Kurds in Kobane (which, by implication, will make matters worse for the Kurds in the long run).

We refused to raise the slogan "Stop the bombing" over Libya in 2011. Does that make us "pro-imperialist"? We refused to call for something which would strengthen our enemies and wipe out our courageous allies. We made no endorsement of US or British policy.

In Libya, the first effects of the overthrow of the bizarre and brutal Gaddafi dictatorship was an explosion of democracy and relatively free elections in 2012 in which liberals won and Islamists were marginal.

Right now we have no guarantee that a victory against ISIS in Kobane will make life better for the Kurds one or five or

ten years in the future. The choice now is between a massacre of our allies versus the victory of Islamist-fascists.

There is something silly about the SP's method here. It is a game anyone can play. How about this: what happened to the Labour Party in the 1990s under Blair invalidates activity inside the Labour Party in the 1970s? Or this: what happened to Derek Hatton in the 1990s invalidates Militant's recruitment of Hatton in the 1970s?

There's nothing certain about the future. All we can do is make choices in the present.

The SP do not argue in any specific way that bombing ISIS will make the future worse for the Kurds. Their leaflet only suggested vaguely: "Further intervention of the US, UK and UN in the region could lead to more division and even strengthen IS."

In contrast, it is certain that a defeat for IS and a victory for the Kurds in Kobane would immediately be highly positive from a working class, humanitarian and democratic standpoint. Who can tell about five years hence? All we can do to make a positive outcome more likely in the future is to help our side win now.

Moreover it is not true that every Western intervention has broadly negative consequences. In 1999 NATO bombing did prevent mass murder of Kosovars by Milosevic's racist Serb imperialism.

That statement is not pro-imperialist, just fact. Our justified estimate in 1999 that the NATO bombing would help Kosova did not make us politically endorse or support the bombing. We maintained our irreconcilable class hostility to NATO.

The SP may respond that the big powers intervene only for their own reasons. That is true, but when the soldiers of a capitalist army come to put out a fire, revolutionaries don't get in their way.

And finally, the Kurds do not have to look as far as West Africa and the Balkans for an example where democrats have been glad of Western help. In 1991, following the first Gulf War, the US-led coalition imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq which protected the Kurds from Saddam Hussein's revenge. The Kurds used the US's help and what emerged was a proto-state and a democracy.

That was true despite the US's overall policy and despite other crimes the US committed at the time (for example encouraging the Shia to rise across southern Iraq and then standing by as Saddam massacred them).

**The slogan "stop the US bombing" equates to "let the Kurds die". So let's not say it.**

# The timidity is sickening

Bob Carnegie



**My first two articles dealing with attempts to organise defence base workers in Australia attempted to highlight the problems with on the ground organising, union arguments over which unions should cover these workers, the workers' battle for jobs and redundancy payment and most important of all, the horrible effect of contracting out of services has on the wages and conditions of those workers concerned.**

I can report that there has been some movement on a couple of these issues. Defence workers in the Northern Territory formerly employed by Serco/Sodexo (SSDS), through their unions, have defeated an attempt by these two ruthless transnational companies to rob them of their redundancy entitlements.

The Fair Work Commission (Australia's labour court) dismissed SSDS's application to renege on workers' redundancy entitlements. Also, on the issue of competing trade unions, United Voice and the National Union of Workers have met and agreed to join forces to attempt to develop unionism in this sector.

So far it all looks great... from a distance.

Where I am close to the ground it appears more like a "shotgun" marriage. Everyone is nodding their respective

heads on one hand but undermining agreement with the other. I was appalled at some of the comments I heard after the meeting.

Working-class people in Australia have been horribly let down by the Labor Party and by most but not all of the major unions. The sheer timidity of most unions' leadership in taking on companies that are horribly exploiting workers is sickening.

I had a middle-aged woman break down and cry because of the stress of the spectre of unemployment hanging over her head. She cried "who will want to give me a start, Bob?" I could only offer a shoulder to lean on and a hankie for the tears.

Townsville has the fourth highest unemployment rate in Australia. The outlook for any worker with limited skills is poor. For a woman in her 50s or 60s, maybe carrying injuries from a lifetime of toil, the employment outlook is non-existent.

The fight goes on, but until real comradeship, fighting trade union unity and strong anti wage-and-conditions legislation is enacted, the race to the bottom in wages and conditions for these and other workers will continue.

**It seems the call for a society based on human need not human greed has become quieter than a deaf church mouse. It is up to us, somehow, to make the voice for those who have nothing much louder if we are to help build something better than this capitalistic planet we call home.**



# Up with solidarity!

**One voter in four would consider voting UKIP at the next election, according to a poll in the *Mail on Sunday* (31 October). The poll was published as UKIP looks set to win the Rochester and Strood by-election. Even allowing for bias from a poll commissioned by a paper which routinely feeds hostility to the EU and migration, the level of UKIP support is disturbing.**

David Cameron's recent proposal to introduce immigration quotas for people entering the UK from the EU is about reducing high electoral support for UKIP. But it's a strategy that is doomed to failure: anybody worried about, or opposed to, the EU and/or wanting to curb immigration is not going to vote for the monkey when they can back the organ grinder — the really anti-EU and anti-migrant party, UKIP.

The background to the Tories' raising of the stakes on immigration, apart from competition with UKIP, is a failure to deliver on a promise to bring UK net migration — the difference between those entering and leaving — to below 100,000. Official figures published in August showed UK net migration increased by more than 38% to 243,000 in 2013-14 and EU citizens accounted for two-thirds of the growth.

All the Tories have succeeded in doing with talk about quotas is annoy EU politicians. Angela Merkel was prompted to state that the principle of free movement in the EU is "non-negotiable". In other words, if Britain wants immigration quotas, it will have to exit the EU.

Of course British capitalists do not want UK to leave the EU. That was why George Osborne was forced to play down the possibility. Quotas may now be off the agenda but all kinds of benefit restrictions remain policy options. At least that policy allows the Tories to claim that migrants (EU migrants, all migrants) are, to quote Osborne, "creating a huge pressure on public services", that this is an issue that "the British public want addressed" because "these... welfare payments [are] paid for by hardworking British taxpayers."

## DISHONEST

**This is all dishonest nonsense.**

Migrants don't come to the UK to claim benefits or access public services. They come to the UK because capitalists want to exploit their labour, and often at or below the minimum wage.

Moreover EU migrants, in contrast to UK-born people, pay more tax per year than they "take out" of the system in benefits and services. From 2001 to 2011 EU migrants paid a surplus tax of around £2,700 per year each.

Unfortunately the Labour Party has joined in on the anti-immigration rhetoric. Speaking in Rochester Ed Miliband promised an immigration bill if Labour is elected in 2015. That will include, he said, action on border checks, exploitation and "opportunities for UK workers". He also promised to double the period of residence before people would be entitled to benefits.

UKIP's recent electoral success (and projected future success) is part of a trend across Europe of growing support for the far right. It cannot be dismissed as flash-in-the-pan protest votes.

Tory and Labour mirroring of UKIP's anti-immigration

campaign is not only xenophobic and dishonest, it is also extremely dangerous. It is helping UKIP to stir up the growing feeling of economic insecurity in society, among both working-class and better-off people.

It is building support for the repressive police operations which regularly take place against refugees across Europe. It is helping to create a political climate where it okay for governments in Europe, including the UK government, to say they will do nothing to prevent migrants from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, because help would "encourage" migration.

It is poverty, exploitation and the violence of states in the capitalist world which impels people to travel thousands of

miles to find work to sustain themselves and their families. It is the left's job to explain why global capitalism works in this way, why it makes us all desperate to one degree or another, how it makes profits off our backs, and why building workers' unity, not raising borders, is the only way to defend ourselves.

UKIP's success is in good part the product of weaknesses in the left's fight to build a constituency for working-class socialism.

**In the Rochester and Strood by-election and in the general election next year, the issue of immigration and countering the racist and xenophobic myths has to be the left's priority.**

**Remembrance Sunday this year, 9 November, will see even more than the usual splurge of war tributes.**

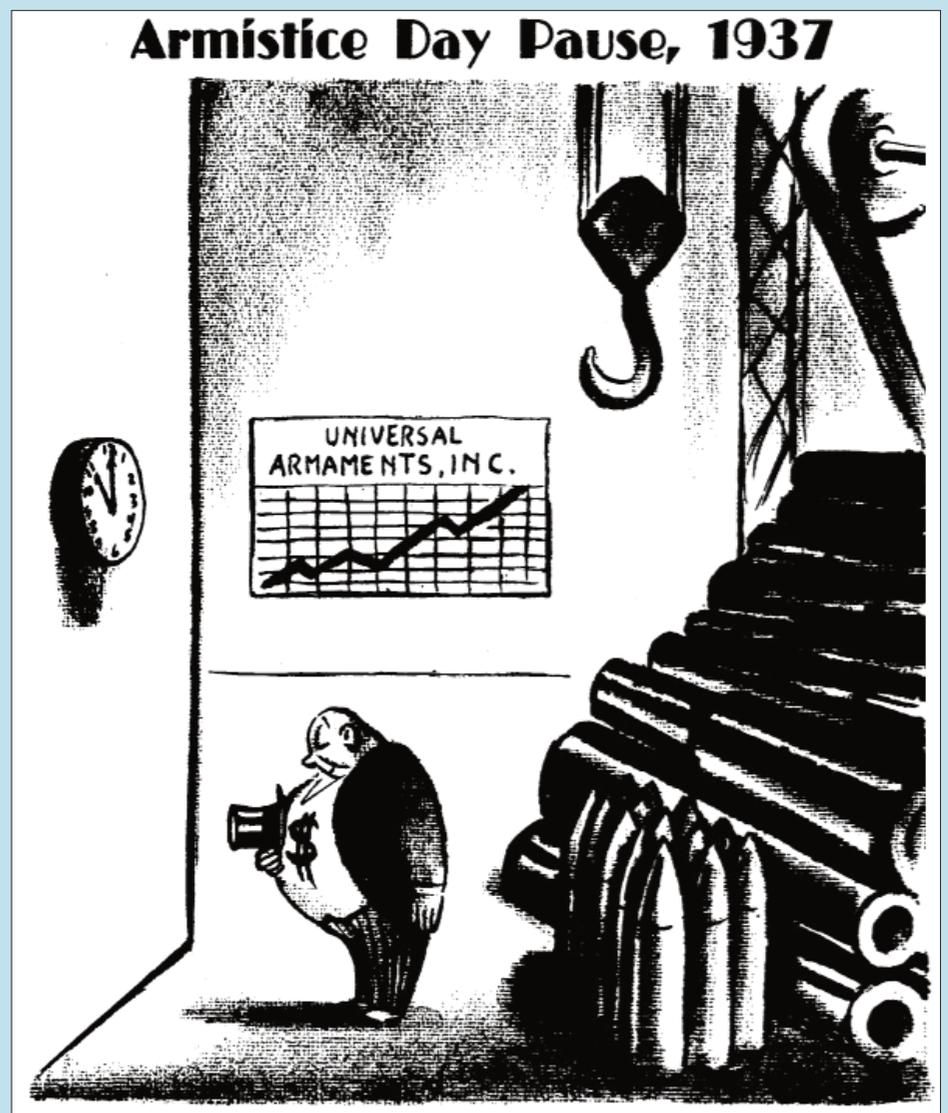
**It remembers not all the victims of war, but only the soldiers on "our side". It is used to boost nationalist and militarist moods which feed future wars.**

**Before World War Two, as the cartoon shows, Remembrance Day was an even bigger deal, with two minutes' silence in workplaces at 11am on 11 November itself, usually a work day.**

**At the same time as they organised the pious tributes, the ruling classes were building up towards World War Two and the wars against colonial liberation battles which followed that.**

**The cartoon is taken from *In an era of wars and revolutions: American socialist cartoons of the mid-twentieth century*, a book which depicts US politics, workers' struggles, America's "Jim Crow" racism, Roosevelt's "New Deal" and Harry Truman's "Fair Deal", and Stalinism in its era of greatest prestige and triumph.**

**Buy for £10.60 at [www.workersliberty.org/socialistcartoons](http://www.workersliberty.org/socialistcartoons)**



# Assad steps up his crimes

By Sacha Ismail

**The Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad has offered the Western governments battling ISIS an alliance “to fight terrorism”.**

But as the *Independent’s* Kim Sengupta put it at the end of September, Assad is now fighting the “enemy he always wanted”.

From the start of anti-Assad struggle in Syria, the regime has worked to strengthen Sunni-sectarian and radical Islamist forces in order to position itself as the champion of non-Sunni Syrians. With the help of foreign (Saudi, Qatari, UAE) aid for the Sunni jihadis, it has largely succeeded in transforming the country’s democratic revolution for the most part into a sectarian civil war.

Obviously Assad and co. would like to re-establish control over the whole of Syria. Given that this is not currently possible, the role of the radical Sunni-sectarians, particularly ISIS, is in some ways helpful to them, weakening what remains of more democratic, secular and simply moderate opposi-

tion forces and pushing non-Sunnis (and maybe even some Sunnis) into at least passivity towards the regime.

Moreover, the Syrian state continues to carry out its own terrorism against the Syrian people, and on a massive scale. With backing from Russia and Iran, the regime seems to hope it can eventually turn the military tide in its favour — and so it keeps killing. In turn this boosts ISIS and other jihadi groups.

In the last month the Assad regime has taken advantage the focus of international attention on ISIS to step up its attacks on civilians. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring network of activists and doctors which documents atrocities on all sides of the conflict, the two weeks to 2 November saw it drop 401 barrel bombs — bombs typically constructed from large oil drums, gas cylinders or water tanks, filled with high explosives and scrap metal or nails and/or chemicals, causing vast devastation and heavy civilian casualties. There is plenty of evidence of deliberate targeting of civilians,

including schools and hospitals.

SOHR says that over 1,900 have died inside the regime’s detention and torture facilities since the start of 2014. This number included 27 children younger than 18. Many tens of thousands, at least, are currently being held.

The UN puts the total number of casualties in the war so far as about 190,000. At the most conservative count 60,000 are civilians deaths, of which about 10,000 are children — a substantial majority killed by the regime.

Since early 2013, we have argued that victory for the dominant military-political forces opposing Assad would not be a victory for democracy. Instead we need to support what democratic, secular and leftist groups there are against the main military contenders.

**The rise of ISIS makes the necessity of such a position stronger than ever. But that is all the more reason for the left and everyone who cares about human rights to increase the volume of our protests against the violent brutality of the Syrian state.**



## Solidarity with the Kurds!

### MANCHESTER

More than 200 Kurds and their supporters marched through Manchester in support of Kobane. Shamefully noticeable by their absence was the majority of the Manchester left. Workers’ Liberty comrades distributed a leaflet and sold papers which were well received.

The Kurdish organisers of the demonstration hadn’t bothered with the technicality of getting police permission for the march from All Saints to Piccadilly Gardens. The very well stewarded march stuck to the pavement with the stewards controlling the traffic at the various road crossings. At Piccadilly Gardens there was a lively rally with speeches singing and dancing. The march and rally clearly grabbed the attention of all those who saw it on a busy Saturday afternoon.

### TEESSIDE

While most of Teesside’s Kurdish activists went to London or one of the other cities’ big demos, a few came to the event called by Teesside Solidarity Movement (TSM) at a few day’s notice. There were not many of us, but as a first step in making links, that wasn’t too bad.

The TSM meeting on 23 October had discussed the Kurdish struggle and ISIS assaults on Kobane, and agreed to support the global rally for Kobane on 1 November.

At very short notice and with no links with the Kurdish community, activists visited every take-away, barber and shop where they thought Kurds might work, with a leaflet promoting a Middlesbrough

event. They also contacted the local Palestine Solidarity Campaign and individuals from the Muslim community that TSM had met.

Though small, the event was useful in making first connections, and TSM hopes to develop those links. There are plans to call a meeting on the current situation, to discuss how to show solidarity.

### LONDON

1,500 people protested in Trafalgar Square, a large majority of those were Kurdish.

Unfortunately non-Kurdish left, labour movement and student activists were present only in small numbers — probably because the conflict in Kurdistan does not fit the “Western powers vs anti-imperialists” template of the British left. There was only one trade union banner, Paddington RMT.

Kurds aside, there were few student activists there except a smattering of NCAFC supporters. Of the “left-wingers” on NUS executive who insist they support the Kurds despite voting down a motion to support them, only one was there.

Left-wing organisations which had made the effort included Workers’ Liberty, the “autonomist” Plan C group, and a variety of anarchists. The SWP and Socialist Party were there, but in small numbers.

There was also a good turnout from the Worker-communist Parties of Kurdistan, Iraq and Iran (Hekmatists), with whom Workers’ Liberty worked to mobilise for the demonstration. The WCP comrades had a very lively and visible presence in the

square, and Dashty Jamal’s speech from the platform was well received.

Workers’ Liberty members sold about a hundred copies of *Solidarity*, and collected two hundred signatures in support of Shahrokh Zamani and Reza Shahabi.

Most speakers were quite general in what they said. Iranian socialist and secularist Maryam Namazie caused a bit of a stir by (rightly) attacking the SWP for their softness on Islamism. Chris Nineham of Stop the War/Counterfire spent most of his speech denouncing the Western powers, which on one level is fair enough — but he didn’t make the case for saying “Stop the bombing”, inserting “Oppose intervention” right at the end in the same breath as “Long live Kobane”.

There were no placards, from Kurdish activists or anyone else, opposing Western intervention or even criticising it.

### SHEFFIELD

Workers’ Liberty members in Sheffield held a meeting on 30 October with local Kurdish activists.

A local Kurdish woman spoke, describing the background of the situation for Kurds in the region.

Half of those attending were local Kurds, and there was heated discussion on the nature of a demand for Kurdish self-determination. There was also discussion around the left’s attitude to the current situation, and how to build genuine solidarity.

There are now plans to set up a Kurdish Solidarity group in the city and organise solidarity actions.

## FUNDRAISER

Organised by the International Federation of Iraqi Refugees

Kurdish food,  
live music  
comedy & poetry

£5 entry

Friday 21 November

7.00pm until late

Institute of Education Bar,  
20 Bedford Way, London,  
WC1H 0AL



# ISIS threat is still strong

By Simon Nelson

**ISIS (Daesh, the “Islamic State” movement) now governs over six million people across Iraq and Syria. Despite an apparent slowing of new foreign fighters coming to join them, they have maintained a large group of fighters and a formidable military capability.**

The Albu Nimr tribe, a Sunni group in Western Iraq, had continued to fight ISIS in Anbar province despite Abadi’s Baghdad government failing to provide arms. ISIS has now executed almost 400 members of the tribe as a punishment for its resistance. ISIS is now closer to the Haditha Dam and the largest airbase in Anbar. The Iraqi army and Shia militias still cannot consistently drive ISIS back.

The Kurdish forces under the control of the PYD (Democratic Union Party) in Syria are now being joined by 150 Iraqi-Kurd peshmerga troops who carry heavy weapons and have been granted passage into Kobani through negotiation between Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). These troops join small numbers of Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters who now fight alongside the PYD-controlled People’s Protection Units (YPG).

The FSA has been allowed to cross the border from Turkey where their leadership is based. Limited collaboration between Kurdish forces and the FSA has increased in recent months. The FSA leadership had previously shunned the Kurds and accused the PYD of working with the regime to guarantee the three cantons that now make up

Rojava, the Kurdish region of Northern Syria which includes Kobani.

Even now, an FSA commander has said that with Assad continuing to attack in Syria, including around Aleppo, the FSA cannot afford to spare fighters to go to Kobani.

According to the *Guardian*, the Syrian-Kurdish PYD maintains that all political groups and military units in Rojava they must take their direction from the YPG. The KRG maintains that the peshmerga will remain under their control whilst providing heavy artillery and other assistance.

The peshmerga have been greeted warmly by Kurds in Turkey who lined the streets as they entered Syria; however the PYD says that its primary demand remains more weapons and not more fighters. PYD spokesman Polat Can says: “one should not forget that with 150 people you cannot even form one unit. They will not have a big military impact.”

Turkey is still opposed to assisting the PYD or any group affiliated to the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). It prefers to see the peshmerga of the Iraqi-Kurdish government, with which the Turkish government has relatively good relations, in control of heavy weapons, and will not allow arms to flow directly into the area.

**Turkish prime minister Erdoğan publicly dismisses the case for support for Kobani. His government continues to claim that: “there are now no people in Kobani except for 2,000 fighters.” Other ministers in the Turkish government have expressed the wish for Daesh to continue to fight the PKK and rid Turkey of a continual threat to its stability.**

## Solidarity with the Kurds, or NATO-bashing?

Eric Lee



**At the 1 November demonstration in Trafalgar Square in support of besieged Kobane, it struck me that the speakers — and more broadly, the left — were not singing from the same page.**

On the one side there were those who were demanding that Britain and NATO do more to help the Kurds fighting against the Islamic fascists of IS [Daesh, ISIS]. For example, Peter Tatchell led the crowd in chants demanding that David Cameron authorise the dropping of more aid to the Kurds, including weapons.

There were calls for Turkey to be suspended from NATO because it, unlike other NATO countries, was not prepared to help the Kurds.

And more generally most of the speakers especially the Kurdish ones, had not a critical word to say about the USA, the West, NATO or imperialism. Everyone was focussed on the evil that is “Islamic State”.

On the other side, some of the far-left speakers went overboard in denouncing NATO, the USA and the West, going so far as claiming that IS was a creation of NATO and Washington.

This was particularly the case with a spokesman for the “Stop the War Coalition” — an organisation whose presence at the event surprised many of the participants.

The Coalition’s website has almost nothing at all about the war taking place today in Syria and Iraq and indeed the only reference to it is video of George Galloway denouncing the support NATO is giving to the Kurds. Galloway also voted against this support in the Commons.

It seems to me that elements of the British far left find themselves in a bit of a bind.

On the one hand, there’s this extraordinary, inspiring resistance movement in Kobane, which has captured the imagination of many who would normally be the natural constituency for the left. The people on the ground, fighting IS, belong to a movement which was seen, until recently, as part of the broad international left.

Obviously they deserve our support — and yet that seems to mean supporting the US and British air strikes, supporting NATO.

To get around this, the far leftists have decided on the “ISIS is NATO” line, which is an extraordinary position — one is almost at a loss for words to describe it.

For those not understanding how IS could be both under NATO attack and simultaneously a creation of NATO, some of the speakers went so far as to say that IS was using American weapons

The implication was that America gave them weapons.

This is, of course, utter nonsense. The American weapons that have fallen into the

hands of IS were taken from the retreating Iraqi army. Taken — not handed over as a gift by the Americans.

One of the anti-NATO, anti-American tirades came from an organisation I’d not previously heard of called the “Revolutionary Communist Group”. (I’m sure that specialists will know the entire history of this micro-sect, but for me it was new.) And groups like this, which get invited to speak at mass rallies, give only a very small piece of their line because they’d be booed off the stage if people knew what they really believed.

The RCG’s speaker shouted the usual stuff about solidarity with the Kurds, but a quick glance at their website shows that they are in fact enthusiastic supporters of the bloody Assad dictatorship and its army. The same Syrian army that abandoned Kobane — an army that no Kurd wants to have back. But there was no mention of that to the largely Kurdish crowd in Trafalgar Square.

So what are people like this, who support Assad and Saddam, who demonize NATO and the USA, doing at these rallies?

They’re there because they can’t afford not to be there. To have nothing to say when the battle of Kobane rages would be unacceptable; they must somehow show solidarity with the embattled Kurds.

But they oppose the very thing — NATO air support — that has made that battle possible. The tide may be turning in Kobane because of US bombing and air drops.

On the ground, some Kurds have been heard chanting “Long live Obama!” How embarrassing for the anti-Americans on the far left.

These people with their crazy views, denouncing the essential support given by the west to the Kurds, praising Assad and Saddam, have no place at Kurdish solidarity rallies. They are there purely to cover their tracks, to provide themselves with some kind of moral cover as IS continues with its murderous rampage across Syria and Iraq.

**We should give them no platform.**



# Jim Murphy would be a disaster

By Dale Street

**Neil Findlay, the left candidate in the contest now opening for leader of the Scottish Labour Party, is a “list” MSP, elected in 2011. He has an established record of taking up trade-union issues, such as black-listing, the role of the police during the miners’ strike, and the Living Wage.**

He has the support of the Campaign for Socialism, Unison, ASLEF and the TSSA have already agreed to nominate him, and Unite is expected to do likewise.

In the deputy leader contest Katy Clark MP is standing as the left candidate, while Kezia Dugdale MSP will probably be the candidate of the right.

Activists need to ensure that any trade unions, CLPs or Affiliated Societies of which they are a member submit nominations for Neil Findlay and Katy Clark by 14 November. Balloting commences on 17 November.

Jim Murphy is the right-wing New Labour candidate in the leadership contest.

Murphy was a student at Strathclyde University for nine years, but left without graduating. During Murphy’s stint as NUS President in the mid-1990s the NUS dropped its policy of opposition to the abolition of student grants.

A subsequent House of Commons motion, signed by 18 Labour MPs, condemned Murphy for his “intolerant and dictatorial behaviour.”

From being an eternal student, Murphy moved straight into Parliament, winning the previously safe Tory seat of Eastwood in 1997. His record in Parliament since then has been one of unquestioning and uncritical loyalty to Blairism. Not once has he ever rebelled in a vote.

Murphy backed Blair’s wars, supported tuition fees, and voted for the benefits cap — but did not bother to turn up to vote against the bedroom tax.

He is a member of the right-wing Henry Jackson Society, sends his children to fee-paying schools, and was identified in 2012 as one of the Westminster MPs who rent out their London homes while claiming public money to rent other accommodation in London.

In the 2010 Labour Party leadership contest Murphy was one of David Miliband’s campaign managers. He subse-



**Jim Murphy, the Blairite candidate for leadership of the Scottish Labour Party**

quently opposed Ed Miliband’s decision not to back Tory plans for military intervention in Syria. At the time of the Ineos dispute and Falkirk re-selection contest, he went out of his way to publicly attack Unite.

Murphy embodies the New Labour policies which cost the Labour Party millions of votes and hundreds of thousands of members after 1997 — and also cost Labour the Holyrood elections of 2007 and 2011.

Although the media are already portraying Murphy as the frontrunner in the contest, his election as leader would be a disaster for the Scottish Labour Party and for the people whom the party was created to represent.

As one contributor to the *Glasgow Herald* has put it:

“I honestly don’t get it. I’m genuinely trying not to be rude or facile, but this is surely someone most of us would not have in our homes, regardless of where our politics lie, so where’s his appeal? A track record of personal greed, being

on the wrong side, and failure. Does shouting the loudest qualify you to lead a country?”

Already the Scottish LP has lost support on such a scale that it risks having as few MPs as it had in the years before the First World War.

When Johann Lamont resigned as Scottish Labour Party (SLP) leader on 24 October it was not because of belated pangs of conscience about her infamous Thatcherite speech of September 2012, in which she attacked Scotland’s supposed “something for nothing” culture.

In that speech she attacked free personal care for the elderly, free higher education, and free prescriptions. It was — and is — SLP policy to support all three. The first two were introduced by a Labour-Lib Dem administration in Holyrood. Labour has also claimed the credit for the third.

She did not resign because she suddenly realised what a disastrous folly it was to have tied the SLP — without any discussion in the broader party — into an alliance with the Tories and the Lib-Dems in the referendum campaign (“Better Together”).

She did not resign because she felt to blame for the fact that, despite an overall “No” majority in the referendum, what had once been the Labour heartlands of Dundee and the West of Scotland voted “Yes”.

No, Johann Lamont resigned, as she explained through the pages of the *Daily Record*, because of attempts to undermine her by some Westminster Labour MPs, because of opposition by such MPs to a further devolution of powers to Scotland, and because the Labour Party in London looked on the SLP as a branch office.

A week after Lamont’s resignation SLP deputy leader Anas Sarwar also resigned, generously saying that the SLP should have the opportunity to elect a new leader/deputy leader team which “should be focused on Holyrood.”

But according to the well-informed LabourList website, Sarwar is being lined up for a Shadow Cabinet post in an upcoming reshuffle. And Sarwar’s resignation also provided a boost to Jim Murphy’s campaign for SLP leader.

**If Sarwar had not resigned, Murphy would have to explain why the SLP should have a leader and deputy leader who were both Westminster MPs. Sarwar’s resignation removed this obstacle to Murphy’s ambitions.**

## Scottish nationalism is a dead end

*Solidarity* is continuing discussion about the implications of the Scottish independence referendum. This week we print an article by Sandy McBurney, an activist in Left Unity, Glasgow.

**The Scottish referendum has to be understood in the context of a capitalist society which is now not merely somewhat rotten, but actually in a state of decay and threatening to disintegrate in many parts of the world.**

The move to finance capital effectively announced by the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 resulted in Britain and other advanced capitalist countries removing much of their industrial base and marginalising from society large sections of the working class.

The parasitic nature of the dominant finance capital is absolutely clear to anyone with a basic Marxist understanding of society and both could and should be pointed out to the mass of society.

The move to Scottish nationalism is instead a dead end — part of the process of disintegration of capitalism.

However, the campaign was effectively posed by both the populist leadership of the SNP, and by the section of the left which supported the nationalist campaign, as a means of escaping the effects of capitalist crisis by declaring a separate state.

Effectively the message of the “yes” campaign for Scottish separation was that the local capitalist class in Scotland would guarantee a type of social democratic paradise in one country in contrast to the austerity attacks in the rest of the

world.

This was clearly an illusion.

The viability of the new Scottish state was predicated on the provision of a competitive tax system and flexible labour market in an attempt to attract investment and engage the UK in a disastrous race to the bottom.

And the promises of the SNP administration to maintain the entire existing economic, political and military structures, and even attempting to retain the currency, marked it out as an absolute falsehood.

The collapse into left-nationalism of much of the Scottish left stems from an inability to grasp the nature of capitalism today, an abandonment of the belief in the political agency of the working class, and the resultant toxic mix of opportunism and desperation.

As socialists, the only independence we should advocate is the independence of the working class.

Supporting the creation of a new capitalist state, and the concomitant nation-building project, results in the binding — and ultimately the subjugation in the name of “national interest” — of the interests of labour to capital in the vain hope that the new Scottish capitalist class will be more benign than the British capitalist class.

Beyond ignoring the global nature and strength of finance capital which will resist even the most modest reforms, the collapse into populist nationalism has resulted in the division of the working class in both Scotland — between yes and no supporters — and between the working class in Scotland and England: a division which makes a united socialist

movement all the more remote.

Rejecting Scottish nationalism should not lead us to embrace any variant of British chauvinism or nostalgia for the Britain of 1945.

Instead, we should reject nationalism in all its forms, work to overcome the division sown by nationalism and fight for the political independence of the working class across Europe and a united European socialist movement.

As a member of Left Unity, I believe Left Unity should therefore:

- Oppose nationalist and separatist projects where no national oppression exists, while supporting the right to national self-determination.
- Commit to the political independence of the working class and the unity of the working class across national borders.
- Affirm Left Unity’s commitment to building a united Europe-wide socialist movement as a matter of urgency.



# How to be more assertive in politics

By Lawrence Welch

**If workers in the NHS (the area I work in) were able to get more insight into how we all respond to “authority” they would be better able to rely on their own skills and knowledge and be more assertive about resisting the current reforms.**

My argument (which could be extended to other workers) is that in order to do this it is vital we extend Marx’s micro analysis of the relationship between the worker and the capitalist in the light of advances in psychological theories and therapies.

The nature of politics requires developing a forcefulness in response to the power of the capitalist system. However real problem on the left is that this forcefulness is not just directed at capitalists but occurs within and between left organisations. The concept of reciprocal roles (developed by Dr A Ryle) provides a means of deepening our understanding of the power of interpersonal conflicts.

From birth we are highly attuned to the other (Kugiumut-sakis, Trevarthen) and a wide range of unconscious patterns of relating are; for example, one person can be domineering and controlling while the other is compliant and submissive or sometimes rebellious. It is vital as Marxists that we become alert to these patterns as we can easily slip into them within and between left organisations, undermining our capacity to develop the dialogue and collaboration fundamental to the solidarity vital to sustained revolutionary activity. I want to look at these issues in the context of building solidarity and connectedness amongst those who oppose the privatisation of the NHS.

## NHS

**The commercialisation and privatisation of the National Health Service at the global political level or in local workplace settings triggers feelings of despair and hopelessness, undermining the vital task of building ways of defending a hugely important service.**

Whilst a political-economic explanation of the changes is essential to grasp both the profit motivated drivers behind the changes and the social values underpinning opposition, the concept of reciprocal roles offers a valuable additional component for understanding how authoritarian directives lead to a largely compliant response.

The difficulty with exploring reciprocal roles in the NHS is that it means connecting the diverse “domains” which are fundamental to an integrated understanding — at the macro level, the Political-Economic and at the micro level, the Social-Psychological. Each domain on its own provides only a partial understanding. Awareness of the interconnections is vital in considering what actions may be effective in opposing the undemocratic dismantling of the NHS. But each domain draws on a vast range of complex knowledge and it is very easy to interpret another domain within the language of the one we are more familiar with.

From a political perspective, individuals can be portrayed as carriers of social structures and a psychological position can be dismissed as self indulgent, a diversion from the real issues. While from a psychological perspective the social is often seen as the individual writ large and political issues are considered an evasion of real emotional issues.

It is vital to recognise the interrelationship as well as distinction between the different domains: the concept of reciprocal roles is highly valuable in the social-psychological domain and may well provide a fruitful tool in the political-economic but it cannot replace for example, the vital statistical information that is so necessary to grasping how money is exchanged in the financial arena. Lucien Sève expresses the connectedness between the domains: “many political problems consist at least in part of a psychological problem which arises for millions” (Sève, 1978).

The 2012 Health and Social Care Act opened the floodgates for the wholesale privatisation of the NHS, a process started by the creation of the internal market by Thatcher in 1989 and built on by the start of Foundation Trusts by Blair in 2004. The Secretary of State no longer has a duty to provide a national health service, undermining a principle fundamental to the birth of the NHS in 1948.

Neither the Tories nor the Lib-Dems argued for these changes in their 2010 general election campaigns and their initial coalition agreement made no mention. Such a huge



NHS staff on strike on 13 October

change without a public mandate, undermines the notion of democracy, and makes explicit the dominance of the values of those who own and control wealth in society, above those of the mass of the voting population.

The scale of change can easily be experienced as overwhelming, eliciting reciprocal role responses of impotent fury (“it’s outrageous”) followed by despair (“there is nothing I can do about it”) or indifference (“we just have to get on with it”). Building effective opposition is not an easy process but I believe it can be strengthened and enhanced if we can deepen our understanding of where our responses come from.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL

**The macro level of the political and economic is built on dominance at the micro level of relationships amongst the population at large and, in this topic, amongst NHS staff.**

**It is perhaps useful to give a brief account of how a “cellular” level of relationships operate in a highly simplified form which can then be connected to the political-economic domains.**

We have immediate “fast brain” quick reactions and thoughtful, slow brain responses to each other and to objects in the world (Kahnemann 2012). These lead to actions, on which rests the possibility of reflecting and learning. The strength of the understanding of reciprocal roles lies in focussing especially on their development within early and childhood relationships.

What is absent from the analysis however is the importance of human labour, the creation and exchange of products, to understanding the development of humans. The wages we receive in exchange for our work are vital in enabling us to sustain our lives; anxieties about loss of wages can powerfully shape our responses to changes in the workplace. The ownership and control of the objects humans produce or the services delivered, however, lies in the hands of the rich and powerful whose financial judgements about how to increase their wealth makes them deaf to the needs of the workforce and to the general population. It usually takes acute crises for the working population to begin to assert their own needs independently from those above them who direct their activities.

“Cellular” relationships operate primarily at the level of personal, family relationships, friendships, local community, colleagues at work where our actions and responses usually effect one other person, or a small group. We experience political reciprocal roles at a deep unconscious level, often unaware of the power of the super-rich. A very narrow view of the world is presented to us by those in positions of authority over us or through the media, subtly shaping the language we use and our concepts and knowledge of the world. This “primes” (Kahnemann 2012) us to think using our fast brain responses rather than encouraging us to think slowly and see how power relationships play a fundamental role in the workplace.

This highly intricate web of relationships is shaped by those in positions of power in the NHS who cascade down-

wards the directives they receive from those above, demanding acceptance of edicts by those in the lower echelons. The fast brain reciprocal role responses all too often trigger an unthinking compliance, a sense that this is the world we have to accept.

Two meanings come together in one phrase: “we’re in this together” gives an appearance of connectedness, equality, the feeling that differences between us are insignificant when faced with difficulties of the economy. The complete emptiness of the phrase is demonstrated by pivotal differences in wealth where the rich and super-rich are only too happy to avoid paying tax while demonising those on benefits.

“Patients’ choice” is something we would all support on the surface but the real meaning for those in power is about creating competition amongst hospitals, not providing open accessible care to all. The hollowness of the rhetoric of putting GPs and frontline staff in charge of commissioning is quickly revealed when private companies are brought in to administer the complex, expensive bureaucracy required by this new system. The dual meanings are powerfully demonstrated by Circle’s ex-banker boss, Ali Parsa, who says “we believe our partners — the doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals — should run their own hospitals” (Hamer, 2012). After Circle took over the Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare Trust in February, they went on to make cuts in nursing posts and the cleaning budget. Can it really be believed that the staff would agree with this?

## LANGUAGE

**Increasingly the deeply human service provided in health care is reduced to the language of numbers as the addiction to performance indicators becomes the central driver for judging the services delivered; a key factor in these numbers is the language of finance and money.**

The imperative for managers in the NHS is to drive, control and criticise the workforce to work more “productively” for less pay. Their focus is on numbers: finance, statistics, and targets directing their immediate, non-thinking responses to those below them. Private independent consultants are brought in to reconfigure services largely ignoring the intimate knowledge the workforce has of how the service operates in practice.

All too often the reactions to commands from above range from conscious agreement to unthinking compliance (“this is how the world is, get on with it”). This merges into resigned acceptance or silent protest of something experienced as disturbing. It is very easy to experience the instructions as just that and to feel impotent.

NHS management increasingly promotes a sense that dialogue and discussion present unnecessary delays; managers become focused on ensuring that the directives they are carrying out are complied with by those beneath them. Genuine discussion amongst adults about complex issues is dismissed as time wasting. Generally the views of the workforce are seen as irrelevant though at times changes are given the gloss of “consultations” (see also Jones & Childs, 2007), the majority of which are meaningless exercises though at least they can slow the process down.

Becoming assertive in the face of this is not an easy process for the workforce and probably more so for those who work therapeutically as the nature of the work requires listening to the views of others and responding sensitively in a way that aims to help the patient to think about themselves.

In contrast, responding to managers requires a very different mental state of assertion not accommodation, expressing an independent viewpoint rather than seeking to reach a shared conclusion as there is a fundamental divide between the participants in this debate. At a minimum, discovering how our own micro level reciprocal roles interfere with our capacity to speak as adults to those in authority over us can at least build our understanding of why it can be so difficult for others to be effectively assertive.

Any change starts with forming a new awareness of reality as it presents itself to us.

This requires fostering a belief that the views held in our own workforce have legitimacy and that the deep unconscious parent-child or teacher-pupil reciprocal roles which can so easily be triggered by the latest management directive need to be brought into conscious awareness.

Awareness alone is of course insufficient to bring about

Continued on page 10

## How to be more assertive in politics

from page 9

change though it is the essential beginning. Discussion with family, friends and colleagues is vital to deepening the awareness that the “modernisation” of the NHS must be opposed. Fortunately as the “modernisations” dig more deeply into the NHS, we are beginning to get expressions of disagreement and dialogue with colleagues. Occasionally there is even a refusal to comply in solidarity with others as in the recent NHS strike for fair pay.

In the further future we need ways of articulating alternatives to how the NHS is currently run by financial targets set by those at a great distance from the workplace. This requires that we deepen our knowledge of what collaboration looks like in order to construct democracy in the workplace. Democracy has to be asserted and regained in the political domain but we also need to think about how it can be a powerful tool in the workplace, engaging those who do the work in the task of developing and improving the services we offer.

Chief executives should be elected, not appointed by representatives of those above them; salary scales should be proportional so that the highest paid have limits placed on what they earn, determined by the wage received by the lowest paid. This could be, say, 10 times or, at the most, 20 times the lowest paid worker. The “reward” of hard work should surely be the satisfaction that it is successfully helping patients, not the number of zeros achieved in a pay package.

For democracy in the workplace to be successful, many tools would be needed. The problems can be seen particularly in the way the political left is organized where differences between individuals often become large barriers in building up effective links between different political groupings.

While there is probably general agreement among the left that the wealth divide (e.g. 1210 global billionaires owning \$4.5 trillion of wealth compared with \$8.5 trillion owned by the 3.01 billion adults with net worth less than \$10,000) has to be broken for serious social change to take place, there are inevitably many different viewpoints on how this should be challenged and what the world might look like in the future.

These divisions are hardly surprising given the complexity of the problem and the unknown nature of the future but the left needs to be able to discover ways of hearing each other’s viewpoint rather than losing sight of commonalities and focusing solely on the differences.

While it is possible for those in authority to hear the views of those beneath them, the likelihood of this will be much less, particularly at middle management level which is subject to powerful commands from above.

The concept of reciprocal roles could form a strong basis for the development of democracy through awareness that our fast emotional reactions to others can easily over-ride our capacity to hear clearly what the other is saying. Our assumed knowledge of an area can make us super confident so that we quickly dismiss another’s differing viewpoint.

**Developing “observing selves” could open up space for dialogue between those who are working at a broadly equal level.**

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# How Facebook changes our brains

John Cunningham reviews *Mind Change: How digital technologies are leaving their mark on our brains*, by Susan Greenfield

**Susan Greenfield is a leading neuroscientist and her book on how the new electronic media, “cybertechnology”, impacts brain development and human behaviour, makes for fascinating and alarming reading.**

The latest research and statistics are clearly summarised and deftly employed to pursue her analysis. Although the jury is “still out” on many of the issues she raises, it can be said with some degree of certainty that cybertechnology and the culture surrounding it (iPhones, iPads, e-mail, computer games, chat rooms, Facebook, blogs, snapchat, twitter etc.) is impacting on brain development and human behaviour in serious and often detrimental ways.

These include: a reduction in attention span, a reduction in basic empathy for other human beings, a decline in social skills, a reduction in the ability to absorb and process information in-depth, an increase in obesity and a growth in narcissism and self-obsession (e.g. the “selfie”).

None of this is conclusive however and there is much discussion of the chicken and egg problem. For example, do computer gamers show increased aggression because of the violent games they play, or are they already inclined in that direction due to other influences in society (drugs, alcohol abuse, family environment, abuse in childhood)?

By contrast the positive side of cyber culture seems rather thin. Computer gamers are often better at the speedy processing of information than non-gamers and are also, apparently, very good at guiding drones! However, even the positives have their downsides: computer gamers may be deft at processing information with astonishing rapidity but their ability to manipulate and utilise information is often shallow when compared to non-gamers. There is also strong evidence to suggest that the much-vaunted practice of “multi-tasking” merely results in all tasks being performed badly, nor does Greenfield offer any evidence (pro or contra) that women are better at multitasking than men.

*Mind Change* makes for depressing reading for those who place the stress in their lives on collectivity and social action for beneficial and radical change. Again and again Greenfield presents evidence of a tendency among regular cybertechnology

users towards an individualism where the “I” comes first and where the often harsh reality of the world, past, present and future, disappears into an obsession with the transience of the present moment, a world where the understanding of consequences, cause and effect, broader social concerns and an awareness of world issues is diminished.

In her own words, “We may be living in an unprecedented era where an increasing number of people are rehearsing and learning a new default mind-set for negotiating the world: one of low grade aggression, short attention span and a reckless obsession with the here and now.”

One of my main criticisms of the book is that Greenfield devotes only one and half pages (of a total of 286) to a discussion of where and when cybertechnology has benefitted larger communities or groups of people, causes, campaigns for social justice and so on. She certainly isn’t the first person to note how cybertechnology helped spread the news of the Arab Spring and only recently news has emerged of Chinese workers using devices similar to Twitter and WhatsApp to organise industrial action. Two years ago when I was involved in raising support for striking Spanish miners there was a marked increase in activity and support when we set up a campaign website, a blog and a Facebook page (not that I can take any credit for this).

More analysis was called for here, although perhaps Greenfield might be excused as this is not the main focus of her book. I suppose that the questions posed here boil down to the key issue of how you translate what is onscreen into activism in real life? Doubtless, there are no easy answers, and any readers who want to comment on this and maybe relate some of their personal experiences are invited to do so.

The concluding chapter, “Making connections” is something of a letdown. No one, surely, could disagree with her call “...to stretch ourselves en masse to our true potential, to ask big questions and to develop original and exciting solutions” but this doesn’t answer any of the questions she raises in the preceding pages. Likewise, her final plea for “connectivity” seems yet another “wouldn’t it be nice if...” moment and the feeling of disappointment is palpable. Perhaps this is simply where we are at the moment.

**This is an important book about the world we live in and its future. We ignore the issues raised at our peril.**

## How war changed them

War poems  
By Janine Booth



Wilfrid Wilson Gibson was born in Hexham, Northumberland in 1878.

He made his living as a poet after leaving school, at first writing poetry in the standard, Victorian-Romantic style. But during his twenties he grew more socially aware, and became well-known for writing about workers and poor people in accessible, everyday language.

Once war started in 1914, Gibson — now living in London, and friends with other poets including Edward Marsh and Rupert Brooke — applied his writing style to soldiers’ experiences of the trenches. He did not fight in the trenches himself: he volunteered, but was rejected several times and when eventually accepted, put to work as a clerk in London. But he set his imagination to work out the conditions of war and became a pioneer in using poetry to draw attention to the plight of rank-and-file soldiers. He was writing about soldiers’ injuries — psychological as well as physical — before the end of 1914.

The two poems below — “The Return” and “Back” — portray the mental trauma of war, even to the extent of changing personality. The first describes a mother’s fear on saying goodbye to her soldier son — not just that he may not return, but that he may return completely changed. The second is in the voice of a returned soldier, so traumatised by his war experience that he has dissociated himself from his soldier self. Like many of Gibson’s war poems, they are

short, direct and hard-hitting. He said he wanted them to “get at” the people who read them.

In 1915, Gibson’s war poems were published in a book, ‘Battle’, which influenced other war poets who are now better known — Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon. A further volume, ‘Livelihood’, was published in 1917.

**Wilfrid Wilson Gibson died in 1962.**

### The Return

He went, and he was gay to go:  
And I smiled on him as he went.  
My boy! ‘Twas well he couldn’t know  
My darkest dread, or what it meant --  
Just what it meant to smile and smile  
And let my son go cheerily --  
My son . . . and wondering all the while  
What stranger would come back to me.

### Back

They ask me where I’ve been,  
And what I’ve done and seen.  
But what can I reply  
Who know it wasn’t I,  
But someone just like me,  
Who went across the sea  
And with my head and hands  
Killed men in foreign lands...  
Though I must bear the blame  
Because he bore my name.

# FBU: pensions fight still on!

By Darren Bedford

**Firefighters in England completed a 96 hour national strike (31 Oct-4 Nov) over pensions as *Solidarity* went to press.**

Firefighters have now taken more than 10 days of strikes in the increasingly bitter dispute over pensions. Reports from picket lines across England have shown solid levels of support from firefighters and widespread public sympathy.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) had expected movement from the government after a series of talks with Fire Minister Penny Mor-daunt. The government three times delayed laying the regulations to give itself time for a new offer.

No new proposals were offered – the minister simply reiterated the position previously on the table from June, before she was appointed.

Some fire service employers have also hardened their position during these strikes. Buckinghamshire had already locked out firefighters for whole shifts during previous short strikes and obstructed union organisation.

When the four-day strikes were announced, the Bucks chief declared that the FBU had not done the legal paperwork properly and therefore the strike was illegal in the county. He did not take the case to court, but instead threatened firefighters with dismissal. Ricky Matthews,



FBU members in Derbyshire on the picket line

the executive council member for the region including Bucks, refused to work and was sacked.

The FBU deserves the solidarity of every worker and trade unionist as the next

stage of the dispute unfolds. **National FBU reps' meetings are being held in the week 3-8 November to discuss the next steps.**

# Train drivers balloted over pay

By Gareth Davenport

**Train drivers' union ASLEF has gone into dispute with the Northern Rail franchise and is to ballot its members, after rejecting a two-year pay offer of 2.7% this year (RPI inflation in April 2014) and 2.5% or RPI next year, whichever is greater.**

The company argues that this is a "good offer" "in the current climate". ASLEF points out that it leaves drivers at the company be-

hind those at other train operating companies.

In a clear attempt to intimidate, propaganda threatening to withhold back pay and not to settle before Christmas has been sent to drivers' home addresses by HR Director Adrian Thompson.

The company has also said it will use Driver Managers to work trains in times of driver shortage.

RMT, the other rail union, is balloting members on whether to accept the cur-

rent offer, with the caveat that they want any gains won by ASLEF to apply to their members too.

It is not unusual for ASLEF to "go it alone" in all sorts of situations, but for the RMT to drag its feet when ASLEF is already balloting is dangerous.

The company is likely to seek to resolve the dispute in favour of drivers only if ASLEF are effective enough. This would increase the pay disparity between grades of staff within the company

and set a precedent for the break-up of the "single-table" pay talks.

Rail bosses, with the backing of the government, may seek to use the dispute to "break" train drivers (one of the highest paid and most well-unionised groups of workers) and start to force through the changes in the McNulty Report.

**ASLEF ballot papers were sent out on 30 October and the ballot ends 14 November.**

# Cinema workers win living wage



Activists in Local Government are organising for a rejection of the pay offer. See [lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk](http://lgworkers.blogspot.co.uk)

**At the end of October, the Ritzy cinema, Brixton announced job cuts – then was quickly forced to drop them following public outrage and plans by BECTU members to return to strikes.**

The threat of job losses comes after workers at the cinema won a pay deal that sees them move towards the Living Wage.

In a similar dispute Curzon cinema has agreed to pay its workers a living wage.

**Ritzy also threatened to renege on the pay deal, until forced to back down.**

# Lecturers begin marking boycott

By Lucy Clement

**University lecturers are preparing to begin an assessment boycott in protest at attacks on pension provision.**

The action, due to start on 6 November, will mean no setting or marking of exams and coursework so long as employers refuse to make concessions. It affects sixty-nine universities, mainly the older "pre-92s".

The University of York has already threatened staff with 100% pay deductions if they participate in the action, effectively a lock-out. UCU has said that any such move will prompt strike action, and it remains to be seen whether management at York will go ahead. Other universities have been more restrained. Management at Oxford and Warwick have said publicly they have concerns about the plans, and there are

clear splits on the employers' side.

The employers' proposals would mean closure of the final salary scheme (already closed to new entrants) and for the first time a proportion of pension provision would be on "defined contribution" terms, shifting the risk of poor stock market performance onto workers.

Although some of the motivation for the changes comes from government policy — firmly opposed to final salary schemes — universities are using regulatory requirements as an excuse to make unnecessary cuts.

Union branches need to organise regular meetings and collective protests to make sure members stay engaged with what can be an isolating tactic.

**Students can support the action by backing the boycott publicly and getting involved in demonstrations and protests on campus.**

# Housing workers to strike for 10 more days

By Charlotte Zalens

**Unite members at housing charity St Mungo's Broadway will be on strike for 10 days from 5 November.**

This follows seven days of strikes from 17-23 October. The decision to call more strikes was taken at a mass members' meeting on Thursday 30 October.

The dispute is over a restructuring following a merger of two separate charities. During the restructure management reduced the pay of new starters and those existing staff who were moved to new posts by £5,000-a-year; took pay out of collective bargaining agreements; and imposed new and draconian policies and procedures.

Unite regional officer, Nicky Marcus, said "We are aware that new chief execu-



St Mungo's Broadway pickets

tive Howard Sinclair's increase is £30,000.

"St Mungo's property portfolio was valued at £101 million 15 years ago and they have continued to buy property ever since. This is not about there being no money available. It is about a redistribution of wealth."

**Strikers will be doing protests outside the town halls of councils who use St Mungo's Broadway for housing services.**

• Strike fund: [bit.ly/1q5CYIR](http://bit.ly/1q5CYIR)

# Defend Julie Davies!

**NUT members in Fortismere and Highgate Wood Schools will strike on 5 November in the dispute to reinstate suspended NUT branch secretary Julie Davies.**

Two strike days have been called for the following week. The NUT is paying full strike pay to members.

An indicative ballot has been held in Park View and a formal ballot will be requested next week.

**The NUT considers that the secondary heads' refusal to commit to union funding with Julie in post constitutes victimisation and a demand for her removal by the council.**

# Teachers vote to continue strikes on pay

**98% in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) consulted voted for continuing the "Stand Up For Education Campaign", 80% for further strikes. Participation was 18%.**

The NUT Executive on 23 October stressed "the successes of our campaign" constituted by talks with

new education minister Nicky Morgan, but retained the option of up to two strike days in the spring term.

**Activists in schools should not wait. The NUT already has a continuing ballot mandate for strikes in local disputes on workload and pay.**



## Ukraine: undemocracy and pluto-democracy

By Dale Street

**Neo-Nazis, fascists, and other ultra-nationalists from throughout Europe converged on Lugansk and Donetsk on 1-2 November to act as observers in the "elections" staged by the so-called People's Republics of Lugansk (LPR) and Donetsk (DPR).**

Vlaams Belang and the National-European Communitarian Party (Belgium), Jobbik (Hungary), Forza Italia (Italy), the Rassemblement bleu Marine (France), Attaka (Bulgaria), "Zuerst" (Germany), and "No to Brussels, Yes to Popular Democracy" (Czech Republic) were all represented among the election observers.

So too, from countries closer to Ukraine, were the Russian Communist Party (ultra-nationalist, anti-semitic and Stalinist-nostalgic) and the far-right Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia and Russian Motherland Party.

The Polish neo-Nazi and Hitler admirer Mateusz Piskorski also acted as an observer. Like many of the other observers, he had performed the same role in the Crimean referendum in March.

These observers all gave the elections a clean bill of health.

This was despite the fact that only parties which accepted the declarations of independence by the LPR and DPR were entitled to stand candidates (i.e. any party supportive of a unified Ukraine was automatically excluded).

And despite the fact that most parties which had wanted to stand candidates in the elections had been barred from doing so by the LPR and DPR Central Electoral Commissions on the basis of alleged deficiencies in their paperwork.

And further despite the fact the LPR and the DPR had no electoral roll, only one in four of the polling stations used in previous elections were open, voters could vote in any polling station they wanted to (i.e. there was nothing to prevent them repeatedly), and armed gunmen were stationed inside and outside the polling stations.

Nor did the fascist election observers find anything remiss in the fact that food parcels were either being given



**Elections in breakaway "Republics" were staged to give veneer of legitimacy**

away or sold cheap at the polling stations, or the fact that "social cards" (needed for welfare benefits, pensions and medical services) were being issued to voters at the polling stations.

The elections, actually non-elections, were staged only as part of a propaganda war to try give a veneer of legitimacy to the Russian-backed breakaway "Republics".

For example, there were no challenges to Donetsk prime minister Zakharchenko's election-campaign claims that the Donetsk coal reserves could be compared to the oil reserves

of the United Arab Emirates, and that Donetsk pensioners would be able to afford to go on safaris in Australia (sic).

Oleg Akimov, named as President of the Lugansk Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), stood "against" Plotnitsky, the incumbent "head" of the LPR.

What the LFTU consists of, and how Akimov came to be its President, is a mystery: until March of this year Akimov was a Lugansk regional councillor for the Party of the Regions with no record of involvement in the trade union movement.

And in last weekend's election Akimov stood as the (token) candidate of the Lugansk Economic Union — the employers' federation (akin to a mini-CBI) in Lugansk.

This "trade union leader" did not find it necessary to criticise Plotnitsky for campaigning as the opponent of "Western values" and for his singling out of same-sex marriages and lesbianism for particular opprobrium.

Zakharchenko is reported as having won the election in the DPR, and Plotnitsky as having won the election in the LPR. In fact, both incumbents had "won" the elections from the moment the decision was taken to stage them

### UKRAINIAN PARLIAMENT

**A week earlier, elections for the Ukrainian parliament (Rada) had taken place. 29 parties contested the 423 seats up for election. (No elections were staged in the 27 constituencies in the Crimea and the LPR and DPR).**

These were elections in the traditions of Western democracy: parties representing the interests of the rich and powerful exploited their wealth, their powers of patronage, and their ownership of the media to coast to victory.

The new Ukrainian government will be a coalition of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, the People's Front, and "Self-Reliance". All are committed to imposing sweeping economic "reforms" at the expense of the poor and the working class, while leaving the wealth of Ukraine's oligarchs untouched.

Not by chance, one of President's Poroshenko's first announcements after the elections was a series of Tory-style proposals to 'reform' the labour market, through increased "flexibility", casualisation, and scrapping existing protection against dismissals.

Apart from the parties of the coalition government, three other parties passed the 5% hurdle needed to win seats in the Rada.

The Fatherland party, led by another oligarch, scraped past 5%. The far right Radical Party of Oleh Lashko scored 7.5%. And the Opposition Bloc, effectively the representative of the more Russian-oriented sections of the oligarchy, scored 9.5%.

As the Ukrainian-Canadian socialist Marko Bojkun has put it:

"Business profits from exports go up and real income of workers comes down as a result of devaluation of the hryvnia and inflation. Corruption in high state office carries on as before. It goes on in the highest echelons of the armed forces. The children of the rich are sent abroad while working class men and women go to the front."

"What kind of stake do Ukrainian workers, the unemployed, students, farmers and pensioners hold in that state if they are giving their livelihoods and their lives for a return to the way things were before, albeit without Russian overlordship?"

Neither the LPR and DPR in the east nor the Kiev government in the west represent the interests of the Ukrainian working class. The former seeks to rally support through a bogus "anti-fascism". The latter seeks to rally support through self-serving appeals to "patriotism".

**Only the genuine socialist forces in Ukraine can rally the working class for a unified struggle against national and social oppression.**

## Free Shahrokh and Reza

**The campaign for jailed Iranian trade unionists Shahrokh and Reza is off to a good start.**

We have now collected close to 300 signatures. Sixty signatures were gathered at a meeting of Kurdish activists at the House of Commons. Similarly at the London demonstration in solidarity with Kobane over 150 signed.

Peter Tatchell, gay rights campaigner, has signed the petition. On Wednesday 5 November Peter tweeted "Trade unionism should not be a crime! #FreeShahrokh&Reza jailed Iranian trade unionists. Sign the petition bit.ly/freesahrokhandreza"

Newcastle Unison local government branch voted on Monday 3 November to publicise the campaign on their branch website and circulate the petition around members.

Workers Liberty is campaigning for the release of both Shahrokh and Reza, and for all charges against them to be dropped. We aim to collect 10,000 signatures by 11 February 2015.

**This date marks the anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. It is now officially celebrated as a nationalist and religious event — but it should belong to the Iranian working class, who overthrew the Shah in 1979**

**and are resisting the ruling class of the Islamic Republic today.**

**Will you help Shahrokh and Reza?**

- Take a petition around your union branch meeting, ask your work colleagues to sign or pass a petition around a university lecture you are in.
- Organise a regular street stall; make banners and placards, ask members of the public to sign the petition.
- Share the online petition: [bit.ly/freesahrokhandreza](http://bit.ly/freesahrokhandreza)
- Change your facebook and twitter pictures to support Shahrokh and Reza.
- Write to your MP and ask them to sign the Early Day Motion tabled by John McDonnell.
- Join us outside the Iranian Embassy, London on 11 February to hand in our petition signatures.
- More info: [freesahrokh.wordpress.com](http://freesahrokh.wordpress.com)

