

# workers power 5

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**THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS  
STILL NO FRIEND OF THE  
WORKING CLASS.**

**THE WORKING CLASS  
MUST UNITE!**



The Conservative Party will...  
-Attempt to crush our unions again,  
-Sell the Post Office to their rich friends  
-Make savage public sector cuts,  
-Make the rich richer and poor poorer  
*and worse...*

## Inside this issue:

- Haiti - aid or colonisation?
- Vote Anticapitalist in General Election
- Why is the US targeting Yemen?
- Tekel strikers shake Turkey

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Troops move in to block price rises

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has nationalised the French-Colombian owned supermarket chain, Exito.

This comes a week after government inspectors, supported by soldiers, temporarily seized control of 70 stores, including three belonging to Exito, when they failed to comply with price controls set by the government.

The price controls were imposed after a devaluation of the currency from 2.15 to the US dollar to 2.60 (for essential imports) and 4.30 (for non-essential imports).

They were accompanied by a 25 per cent increase in the national minimum wage.

Inflation in Venezuela stands at 25 per cent, and this sequence of measures has helped to impose at least part of the cost of the devaluation on Venezuela's capitalists and the better-off sections of the middle class.

Inflation in the UK rising in December more quickly than at any time in the last 13 years, and the supermarkets are cashing in as a result.

Surely it is time to advocate similar measures here - that way we can start to make the rich pay for their crisis, not the working class.

### Malawi: vicious anti-gay campaign

A trial in Malawi has thrown into focus the country's repressive anti-gay laws.

Two men, Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Steven Monjeza, were jailed for up to 14 years for "gross indecency", for holding a wedding ceremony in public. Nor is repression confined to lesbians and gays. An administrator for human rights group CEDEP was recently arrested on charges that their HIV education material is pornographic.

The couple's supporters are challenging the judgement, citing equal rights clauses of the Malawian constitution. Campaigners are also calling for a referendum on homosexuality to achieve "consensus". In the existing conservative climate, this will not achieve lesbian and gay equality. Besides, it is not up to the non-gay 'majority' to grant equality to gay people - equality is our right!

Winning equality for oppressed minorities requires linking the struggles for workers' and gay rights, fighting anti-gay prejudice among workers, and using class struggle methods to achieve real victories for a class-based movement for equality. This also applies in Malawi, where the law excludes 90 per cent of workers from union protections.

### Half of all black youths out of work

Almost half of all black youth are out of work and one third of Asian youth. But Labour's John Denham, the communities secretary says non-whites are no longer "automatically disadvantaged." These unemployment rates compare to 20 per cent of white youth who can't find work, according to a broad survey by the Institute of Public Policy Research.

In a play to damaged white working class communities, Denham claims Labour's race equality laws mean class is now the main cause of inequality and that white working class youth face discrimination in education and jobs. But figures show that during this recession joblessness has soared twice as fast among black youth.

This attempt to pitch race and class against each other seems to serve Labour in two ways. First, it's to win back some voters who have left Labour and votes BNP as a protest in previous elections.

Secondly, it's preparing for cuts in social and community projects that help black and Asian youth. For socialists, both race and class are factors in discrimination - as is age. We must fight the corner of social oppression wherever we find it in our communities.

# Tekel workers in crucial battle with Turkish state

**Marcus Halaby**

**T**welve thousand sacked workers at Tekel, Turkey's former alcohol and tobacco monopoly have been on strike since 14 December. Up to a hundred and forty of them have been on hunger strike, five of whom have already been taken to hospital.

They are demanding their transfer to jobs in other state enterprises, and the protection of wages and benefits that they enjoyed prior to factory closures imposed after the sale of the Turkish industry to British-American Tobacco.

This struggle has placed them in direct conflict with the Article 4/C policy of the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This allows workers dismissed from privatised firms to be transferred back into to the state sector - at the expense of

their wage levels, job security, health benefits and overtime pay.

Additionally, workers employed under this policy may only work between 3 and 10 months of the year, receiving no wages or social security benefits when they are not working, and being forbidden to take other jobs when not being deployed.

#### Vicious attack from bosses

The Tekel workers affected by this can expect to see their wages reduced almost in half. The desperate urgency of this struggle can be seen in the comments of one of the hunger strikers, who pointed out that his children would be better off on the pension they would receive if he died, than on the miserly and irregular wages he would earn if he lived.

Their struggle has also placed them in direct and open conflict with the trade union leaders. On 17 January, a demonstration

in the capital Ankara of 100,000 people (including other workers and leftist organisations) saw Tekel workers seize the building of their union federation, Türks, and demand that its president Mustafa Kumlu, either resign or call a general strike for 26 January.

The union officials were only able to restore control by threatening the protestors with police violence - the police making use of their right to disperse the crowd once the "official" demonstration had been declared over.

#### National strike

What is significant about this struggle is that it involves workers from across the whole of Turkey, with 43 workplaces in 21 cities. In particular, Tekel's workers come both from the tobacco-growing regions of Turkish Kurdistan in the east, and from the ethnic Turkish-dominated western half of the country.

A vote called early in January on whether to continue the strike saw an overwhelming majority in favour, with unanimity amongst those in Ankara, and a 99.6 per cent vote in favour in the provinces. Public sector strikes are illegal in Turkey, but their determined action has inspired others (including railway workers and firefighters) already mired in disputes that had seen them attacked with tear gas, water cannons and police batons.

The militancy of the Kurdish workers in particular have helped transform the previously chauvinist attitudes of many Turkish workers, with comments being made that "if it was not for the Kurds, we could not have come this far". This is especially important, given the government's subtle incitements against the Kurds as its social peace crumbles and as its attempts to placate Kurdish aspirations have reached their narrow limits.

**EDITORIAL**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

# STOP THE TORIES

★★★

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The election campaign in the political mainstream is well under way with the Tories in the lead in the opinion polls. The Tories are hoping to take advantage of the disillusionment with Labour that has set in after their 13 years in office.

Many older workers who can remember the 1980s are obviously worried about the return of the Tories to power. They are a rotten reactionary party that are experts in waging class war - for the bosses, against the workers.

The last time they were in power they waged a ruthless battle against the trade unions and the working class - they smashed the miners' and the printers' unions, brought in the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe, privatised the phones, gas, water and railways, and even called workers who dared to resist "the enemy within". They scrapped regulations on the City and the banks unleashing the forces of casino capitalism that exploded in last year's great financial crisis.

And they justified all this with an aggressive right wing ideology, denouncing solidarity, celebrating greed and individualism, banning councils from 'promoting homosexuality' and whipping up racism against black people and ethnic minorities.

**Cameron no different**

Under David Cameron the Tories have gone out of their way to present themselves as a "nice" socially liberal party that has put the hard line Thatcherism of the 1980s behind them. In speech after speech since Cameron became leader of the Tories he emphasised "social responsibility" and the need for a "caring politics".

But just one look at Tory party policies shows that this is just hot air. The Tories plan tax cuts for millionaires while hiking up VAT. A few years ago they toyed with being the "anti-poverty party" but are now saying - ridiculously - that "parenting not poverty" determines a child's opportunity. They are committed to across the board public sector pay freeze - and said they will strengthen

Thatcher's anti-union laws even more if the trade unions dare to challenge it.

They have promised an emergency budget "within 50 days" of coming to power to introduce swingeing cuts to our services. George Osborne, the Shadow Chancellor, has said this will be modelled on the Irish government's austerity plan that has ripped the heart of the Irish welfare system.

Lord Forsyth, an influential figure in Tory policymaking, said at the Conservative conference that he believed public spending needed to be cut by £75 billion per year until 2015. That's a lot more than the entire yearly education budget and would be equivalent to budget cuts of twice what Labour aims to make if they win the election.

He rounded the speech off by saying, "taxes should not go up." This could only mean a public services massacre that would hit not only the most vulnerable but every worker who depends on public services - leaving the middle classes to jump ship to the private sector, as our state services are left in ruins.

**Tories can be defeated**

The Tory party do not have support from a majority in Britain for this perspective - that's why they are desperately trying to cover up their real intentions. Even now they only have around 38 per cent support in opinion polls - just six per cent more than their disastrous showing at the 2005 election.

They still can't win actual mass support for their policies, even though Brown and Blair have prepared the way for them by attacking time and again the working class people on whom Labour's support depends.

The very fact that the Tories are now riding high in the polls is Blair and Brown's fault: for their bloody war in Iraq, for axing the 10p tax rate for low paid workers, for letting bosses sack scores of thousands and giving hundreds of billions to the banks, for letting state owned RBS lend money to US company Kraft to buy Cadburys and sack thousands of workers here, for backing the bosses over the workers every time.

There is nothing inevitable about the return of the Tories to power - they can be stopped. Don't let your workmates or friends be fooled into backing them - expose their lies to everyone you know - lets raise the arguments against them in every workplace.

**No holding back on the struggles**

Faced with the rising Tory threat, some union leaders may call on workers to show restraint and give in the bosses rather than rock the boat for the Labour government. This is obviously one of the main reasons why the Unite union leaders have promised that BA workers will not strike over Easter - even though this is the best chance they have to really put their employers under pressure over the months ahead.

Workers should reject these arguments. Of course we don't want the Tories in. But if we hold back and lose ground to the bosses now in the fight for jobs, pension rights and conditions, then it will be harder, not easier, to take on the bosses and government after the election - whoever wins.

**Anticapitalist alternative**

Many union leaders - and of course Labour MPs - will point to the Tory threat as a way of discouraging socialists from standing candidates against labour in the election. 'You will split the vote and let the Tories in' they will claim.

We should reject this argument too. Labour's betrayal of its working class supporters is the only reason the Tories have a hope in hell of winning anyway. Unless we can build a strong challenge to Labour at the elections we will never break out of the two-party system, the rotten merry-go-round of broken Labour promises followed by vicious Tory attacks that makes up the history of parliamentary democracy in modern Britain.

But without an alternative, Labour will disappoint the workers every time, raising the risk of Tory rule.

That's just one more reason why we need a new anticapitalist party in Britain: to oppose the bosses' politicians and the system they represent.

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## EARTHQUAKE

### Haiti: from slavery to semi-colony

Haiti is effectively run by the UN, and behind it the US. Most aid is funnelled through foreign non-government organisations (NGOs), backed by 9,000 UN peacekeeping troops.

Haiti gained independence with the great slave revolt of Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1797. But the imperialists have been seeking revenge ever since. Independence is only of the most formal variety. It is an extreme example of what Marxists call a semi-colony.

The US has been interfering in Haiti for nearly a century. US marines occupied the country in 1915 and stayed until 1934. Between 1957 and 1986, the US backed Papa Doc and Baby Doc Duvalier's brutal dictatorship. They feared the Haitian masses might be infected by the revolution in neighbouring Cuba.

Baby Doc Duvalier finally fled to France with his family's ill-gotten gains, and a populist priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide won the presidency in 1990 by a landslide. The country's millionaire elite used their control of the rest of the state machine to frustrate and oust him in a military coup in 1991, with the collusion of the CIA and US president George Bush Senior.

Bill Clinton restored Aristide in a US invasion in 1994. But the IMF imposed neoliberal 'reforms' - nicknamed the "plan of death" by Haitians. Aristide was elected again in 2000.

The Bush Junior administration set out to undermine him. Loans were blocked and there was sabotage by the country's business elite. A second coup in 2004 was spearheaded by local gangsters, acting on behalf of the Haitian elite, but bankrolled by leading figures in the US Republican Party. Aristide remains in exile in Johannesburg, South Africa.

# Haiti - aid or

## Why is the massive international aid effort in Haiti being interfered with by thousands of US troops?

By Christopher Newcombe and Dave Stockton

The numbers of dead in the Haitian earthquake could reach well over 200,000.

The quake measuring 7 on the Richter scale was succeeded by over 30 aftershocks, each over 4.5. The quake crushed houses, schools, hotels, the parliament building, the presidential palace, the United Nations (UN) headquarters and, critically, eight hospitals. It swept away much of the flimsy shanty towns that straggle up the hills surrounding the capital Port-au-Prince, a city of two million people.

Piled up in mounds, bodies are being scooped up by dumper trucks and buried in landfill sites. An even worse fate has befallen thousands of the living, trapped and in agony, under the huge number of collapsed buildings. By now those that could have been saved by an immediate and coordinated international response have most likely perished under the rubble.

For the shocked survivors - many still searching for their loved ones - life is a living hell. The capital city's open spaces, such as the Champs de Mars, are crowded with 'tents', most just pieces of flimsy plastic sheeting stretched over poles. The International Red Cross said that three million of Haiti's nine million people would depend on emergency aid to survive in the weeks ahead. Millions are without shelter, light, power, food and water.

And yet instead of reports of rescue teams and medical units, the news is filled with the sight of more and more US soldiers and UN military personnel being sent to Haiti. Nine days after the tragedy, the US announced that it is sending another 4,000 marines and sailors to the island. Meanwhile, news agencies report from location after location that the Haitians, busy pulling victims out of the rubble with their bare hands or organising makeshift hospitals and kitchens, have seen no foreign aid as yet.



In fact the US and UN militarisation has hampered aid efforts, according to a number of charities. Nor has the much talked about disorder and looting actually occurred, except in a handful of isolated cases - unless you count as looting starving people taking food from collapsed houses and shops to feed themselves and neighbours.

This malign neglect by the US government, the military and the UN big shots has cost thousands more lives and extending the terrible suffering of survivors. It proves that the first priority of the US is not aid, but in fact the military occupation of Haiti.

#### US invasion

As the international aid effort began, the US military quickly took control of Port-au-Prince's sole airport. Several thousand heavily-armed US troops patrol its perimeter, which one reporter, Sebastian Walker (Al Jazeera), described as "more like the Green Zone in Baghdad than a centre for aid distribution". Inside the airport are vital water and food supplies, yet Haitians are excluded from entry.

Permission to land is granted - or denied - by the US, with priority given to US military aircraft. Six Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) planes with surgical teams, equipment and an inflatable hospital were rerouted to the Dominican Republic, creating a 24 hour delay in their arrival to Haiti. Two Mexican aircraft carrying life-saving

equipment were also turned away. The list goes on. Meanwhile, US aircraft bringing in more soldiers are free to come and go.

Patrick Elie, activist and former minister in the Aristide government, which in 2004 was overthrown in a US-backed coup, stated: "There is no war here. We don't need soldiers as such... The choice of what lands and what doesn't land... should be determined by the Haitians."

The UN aid effort doesn't look much different. "Men in uniform, racing around in vehicles, carrying weapons" is how Walker describes the UN presence. The great majority of UN personnel are clearly not there to rescue or aid survivors, but to enforce the law. Many Haitians were left to dig through the rubble alone, often with their bare hands or the most basic equipment.

Bill Quigley, a US-based advocate of human rights in Haiti, accused the media of looping footage of looting, exaggerating the problem, and giving the impression that Haitians are lawless and beyond help. This in turn 'justifies' the use of heavily armed troops, whereas, Quigley says: "Militarisation hinders relief. The goals of humanitarian assistance are radically different from the goals of the military."

Even the BBC - whose on-the-ground staff have started to talk of the incredible courage, dignity and community spirit of the Haitians - at first also talked of "mobs" and "gangs" and said security had to

# colonisation?

come before aid. The demonisation of Haitians as 'looters' serves the militarisation agenda of the US/UN.

On the BBC World Service an American Jesuit doctor in Haiti reported that he had seen none of the international and US army help whatsoever, nor had he seen any disorder from the Haitian population. Indeed he said they had organised help for themselves, including at his field hospital, forming orderly queues of the injured waiting for treatment and themselves selecting of the worst cases as priorities.

The scale and composition of the US operation is also telling: 9,000-10,000 troops, including 2,000 marines, an aircraft carrier, an amphibious assault ship and assorted amphibious vehicles, dock landing ships, coastguard vessels and helicopters - and one hospital ship. Before the earthquake, the number of US military personnel in Haiti was reportedly just 60. Now, combined with UN forces, there will be around 20,000 foreign troops in Haiti - more per capita than currently occupy Afghanistan!

## Troops to stay

These events amount to a re-colonisation of the state. Hillary Clinton announced: "We will be here today, tomorrow and for the time ahead." Seizing the 'opportunity' of the earthquake disaster, the current military operation was begun unilaterally by the US, with the excuse that the Haitian government had collapsed. The chief decision making is in the hands of the military Southern Command (SouthCom), not civilian agencies.

SouthCom has its HQ in Miami and controls US military installations throughout Latin America. Its unspoken mission is to ensure the maintenance of subservient national regimes committed to the neoliberal policy agenda. The presence of US in Haiti creates a base from which to pursue the US's strategic and geopolitical objectives in the Caribbean basin, largely directed against Cuba and Venezuela.

Haiti's huge natural wealth is also a motive for colonisation. The former President of the Dominican Petroleum Refinery, Leopoldo Espallat Nanita, said shortly before the quake that Haiti has - besides

major untapped petroleum resources and copper - important uranium, zirconium and iridium deposits. The latter are rare and valuable minerals used in high tech industrial processes. Typically Naninta said that these could be used to pay Haitian foreign debt. Meanwhile Bill Clinton and George Soros have suggested that Haiti could become a site for garment factories seeking cheap labour (sweatshops) or some sort of historical theme park on slavery for US holiday makers.

In the face of this occupation aimed at plundering the country, socialists and internationalists should demand:

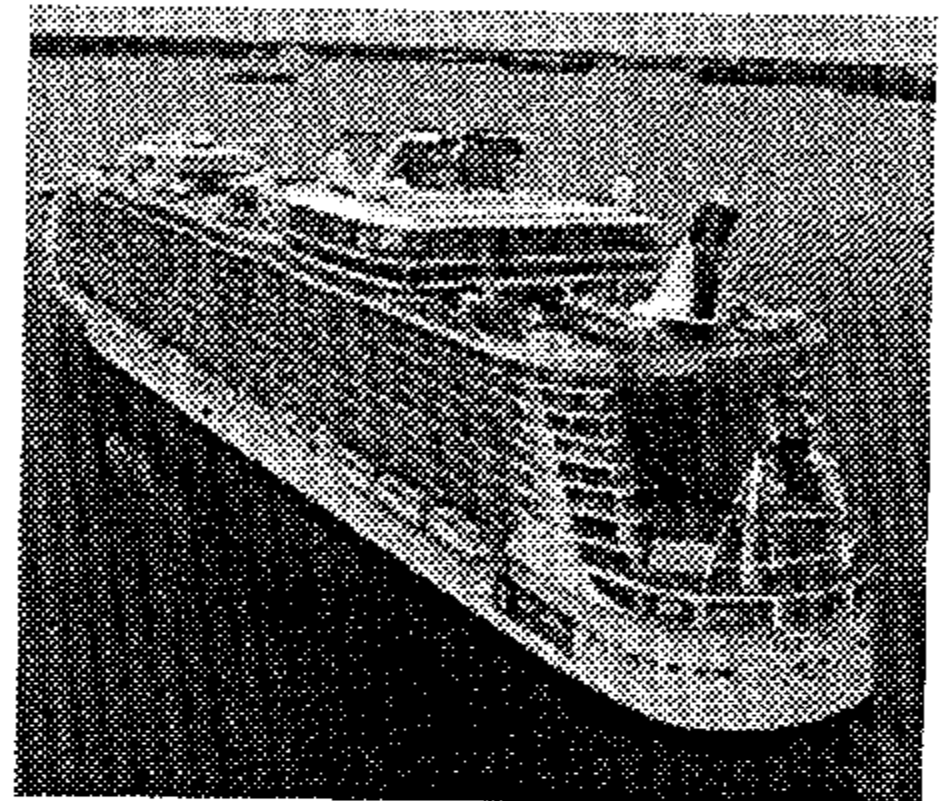
- Much larger numbers of rescue teams with all the most modern equipment is dispatched at once. Only tiny rescue forces have been sent, when thousands of doctors, firefighters and nurses would volunteer.
- All armed military personnel to be withdrawn. If they are there to rescue those trapped in building then why do they need their weapons? Disarm or leave now.
- Drop food and medicine all over Haiti
- No use of UN or US troops to "restore order" - independence for Haiti.
- All Haiti's debts should be written off at once and without strings or conditions.
- Billions should be paid over by the US and the EU countries for reconstruction and development. Not as loans but as reparations for the three centuries of plunder of the country by European and North American powers.
- "Illegal" Haitian immigrants in the US and Europe must be given full citizenship rights and the ability to communicate with their homeland.

And, as the masses recover from the dreadful trauma of the earthquake, socialist workers and youth around the world must be ready to support them as they fight back against the parasites that have oppressed, exploited and impoverished them for so long.

No greater proof of the need for a revolution to overthrow capitalism and imperialism worldwide could be given than the carnage this system has inflicted on Haiti.

## Get the cruise liners to bring in food, water and medicine!

Royal Caribbean Cruises' decision to continue its stopovers in the resort of Labadee on Haiti's northern coast, 129km from Port-au-Prince, is sickening. The private resort, leased by Royal Caribbean from the Haitian government, was almost entirely unaffected by the



earthquake. The docks, which take huge cruise liners, could be used to unload relief supplies, but, says Royal Caribbean, US military advisers declared it "unsuitable". The ship pictured is the Oasis of the Sea, the biggest liner in the world and Royal Caribbean Cruises' flagship. It is a 16-deck ship that can accommodate 6300 passengers and 2100 crew members and sails out of Florida. Imagine what that ship could do to aid Haiti.

## Is this just a 'natural disaster'?

It is wrong to present the huge loss of life as primarily a natural disaster. When an earthquake of exactly the same severity hit in northern California including San Francisco 21 years ago 63 people died - not 200,000.

The first reason for the loss of life is that 60 per cent of the buildings in Port-au-Prince were so badly built that the city's mayor had already declared them as unsafe in normal conditions (though the city has no building regulations despite being on a major fault line of the two American continents' tectonic plates).

Geologists had also been warning for some time of the likelihood of a major quake in Haiti.

## Nation of absolute poverty

- Under the protection of the UN and the US, a wealthy elite of a few thousand families, many of them millionaires, live a life of luxury in the suburb of Pétienville while between 60 and 80 per cent of Haitians live in absolute poverty.
- The unemployment rate stands at 75 per cent and 40 per cent have no access to primary healthcare. Only 20 per cent of Haitians can read and write.
- Three-quarters of the nine million people living in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day. Half have no access to clean drinking water.
- It has the highest rates of infant and maternal mortality in the western hemisphere.
- Between 1975 and 1998 GDP per capita in Haiti fell from 500 to \$370 per annum.
- In the CIA World Fact Book, Haiti was 203rd out of 229 countries in terms of GDP per capita in 2008.



**STATE REPRESSION**

# Slogans banned, juries scrapped, rights removed

Approaching what could be its last few months in government, Labour is unrelenting in its attacks on our civil liberties. *Natalie Silverstein* discusses the latest developments

One of Tony Blair's early steps in office was the Terrorism Act 2000, which broadened the legal definition of 'terrorism', allowing the state to ban organisations and imprison people for up to 10 years' for being members.

This was initially used against the IRA and other Irish organisations, including Ulster loyalists. Since then numerous other organisations have been added, including Hizbullah and the Tamil Tigers. What many of these organisations have in common is the use of 'armed struggle' in their fight against national oppression.

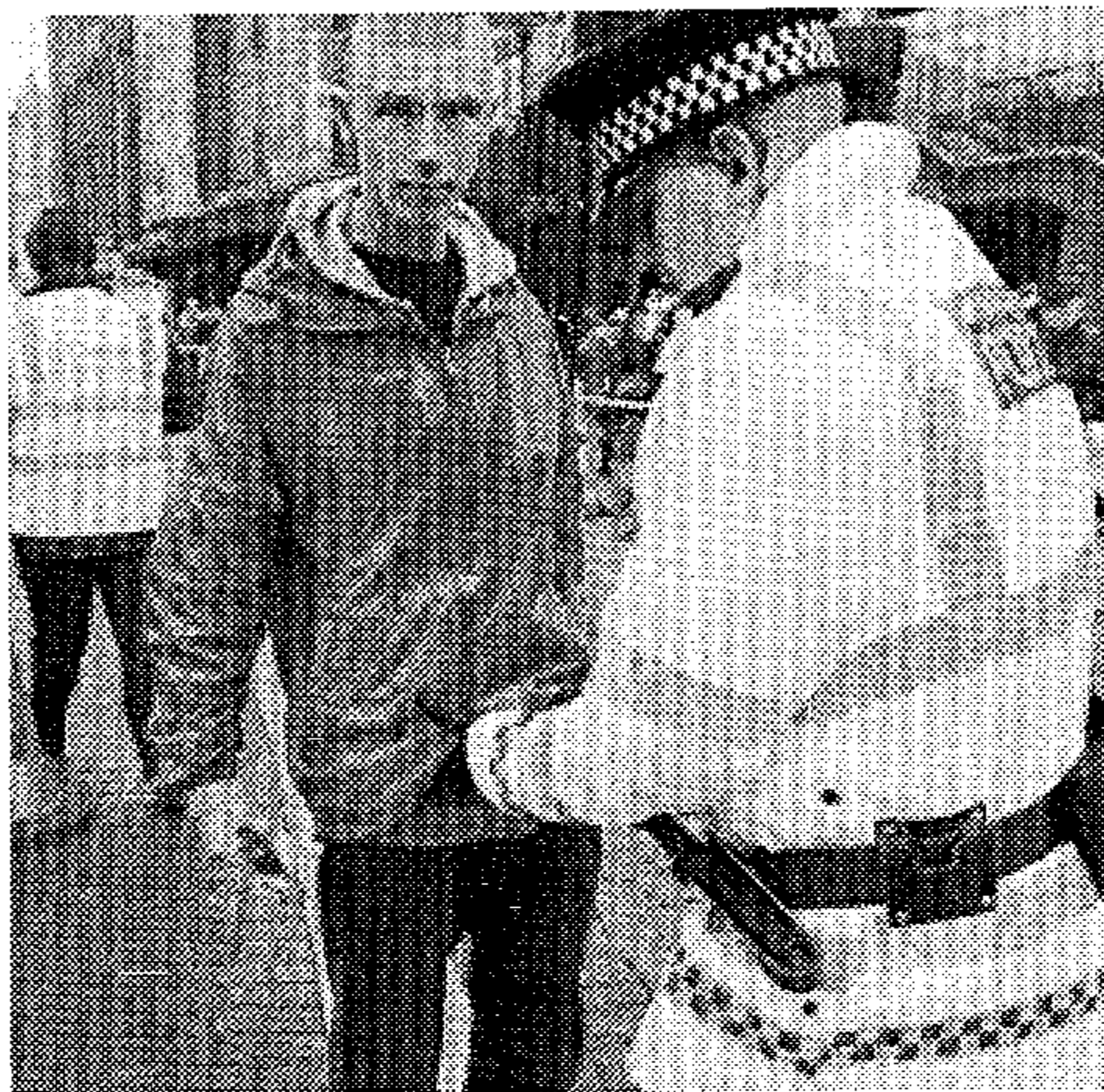
This changed in mid-January, when Home Secretary Alan Johnson announced that this power would be used to ban the organisation Islam4UK. This came amidst outrage at Islam4UK's planned march in honour of Muslims civilians killed in Afghanistan through Wootton Bassett, where the bodies of British troops are repatriated.

Islam4UK is a vile fundamentalist organisation, utterly opposed to democracy and freedom of speech, whose members have carried banners with slogans such as "Shariah is the solution, freedom go to hell." But the ban followed the proposed Wootton Bassett march, which was planned as a peaceful demonstration. Unlike other banner groups, Islam4UK are not involved in 'armed struggle', or planning terrorist or violent acts.

Even the right-wing Evening Standard questioned the decision to ban a group whose "views, however abhorrent, do not breach laws such as those against incitement to murder and racial hatred."

The ban was about a pro-war government deciding which slogans are acceptable and which are not. We should fully defend the right of any organisation to march in any town or city to highlight the plight of the many thousands of Afghan victims in this conflict.

The fact that this was considered offensive to the families of British troops is a disgusting abridgement



Section 44 allows police to stop and search without grounds for suspicion

of the racism that values British lives above those of Afghans. Islam4UK called British troops "baby-killers" and "rapists", but armies of occupation do carry out horrible acts like these and the British and Americans are no exception. There is plenty of documented evidence of murder (including of children), torture and rape by the Americans and British in Iraq.

If the government can ban organisations for this it is another step towards 'thought' becoming a crime. If it is allowed, it will create a situation where these laws can be turned against the left, anti-war activists and other progressive movements.

We should be locking up the people who started this war not people who oppose it.

This new repression could be seen at the recent trial of Islam4UK supporters. Five of them were convicted of the offence of "using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress". The District Judge stated that to call soldiers "murderers" and "rapists" was

"baby killers" was insulting, not just to the soldiers but "to the citizens of Luton who were out on the streets that day to honour and welcome soldiers home." But, as one of the defendants pointed out: "To shout the truth in a street is not an insult. We were highlighting the truth."

The Protesters also pointed out that they had complied with police in planning the demonstration and the route, and that officers had raised no objection to their slogans at the time. This argument was also rejected, with the District Judge pronouncing that their conviction was "a proportionate response to the legitimate aim of protection of society and maintenance of public order", indicating that the interference with freedom of speech is justified on this basis.

The existence of public order laws to criminalise words is reactionary and a serious restriction on freedom of speech, but the use of these laws in this situation is particularly disturbing.

While a Magistrates' Court decision is not technically binding on later cases, it will set a dangerous

precedent as it suggests that public criticism of the role of British soldiers involved in brutal imperialist wars is potentially a criminal offence.

### Trial without a jury

Labour has also stepped up attacks on the rights of criminal suspects, as the first Crown Court trial without a jury in over 350 years was held on 12 January 2010. The right to have 12 members of the public standing between you and the state when facing a serious criminal charge is a fundamental (although limited) safeguard against arbitrary convictions by the bourgeois judiciary. But in this case, involving four men accused of an armed robbery involving firearms at Heathrow Airport in 2004, the prosecution used powers introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which allow for trial without jury where there is a real danger of "jury tampering".

The defendants have already stood trial three times for the same alleged offence, with one trial at the Central Criminal Court lasting over six months. In a preliminary hearing before their fourth trial, the Lord Chief Justice stated that a "very significant" risk existed in this case, after hearing evidence of previous attempts at jury tampering. However, this evidence of these attempts was withheld from the defence on "public interest" grounds, so they had no chance to argue against it in any meaningful sense.

So when the interests of the police and prosecution in securing a conviction are paramount, the rights of defendants to a fair trial are abandoned. It is outrageous that defendants facing years and possibly decades of imprisonment should be denied the right to be judged by their peers.

### Stop and search is illegal

As the government continues to unravel the most basic of our civil liberties, it took a hammering in the European Court of Human Rights when the ECtHR ruled the use of stop

## IRAQ INQUIRY

and search powers illegal. These powers were also introduced under the 2000 Terrorism Act.

Section 44 of this Act allows police to stop and search anyone in a designated area, without having any grounds for suspicion of the individual, and to demand and record their name and address.

Protester Kevin Gillan and journalist Pennie Quinton brought this case to the European Court. They were searched using this power when they attended a demonstration against the Excel Centre Arms Fair in 2003. Police detained Gillan for 20 minutes and Quinton was held for up to 30 minutes and ordered to stop filming despite showing her press card.

The court ruled that the searches had violated Gillan and Quinton's right to privacy, stating that a power allowing searches to be made without any suspicion led to a "clear risk of arbitrariness", and noted statistics that black and Asian people were at least four times more likely to be stopped than white people. They criticised both the use and authorisation of powers under Section 44, which were far too widely drawn and had inadequate safeguards against abuse.

The Home Secretary Alan Johnson has decided to appeal to the grand chamber of 17 judges. This is a very unusual step, and is only available for a decision that raises "a serious question of interpretation or application or a serious issue of general importance".

The Home Office quickly decided that UK law would remain unchanged and that, "pending the outcome of this appeal, the police will continue to have these powers available to them." So it is business as usual for the police to randomly stop and harass Protesters, ethnic minorities and anyone else they don't like the look of.

These latest developments are all examples of the government giving more and more powers to the state, to decide which organisations and views are legitimate, whether people are guilty of offences, and to arbitrarily harass minorities and dissenters. In the name of fighting terrorism, they actually criminalise thought and expression, and prevent legitimate protests on issues like the war on terror and the arms trade.

We need a mass movement of workers, youth, ethnic minority communities and activists to fight the introduction of further authoritarian measures and to take back our democratic rights.

# Bloody cover-up

*Dave Stockton* looks at why the Iraq Inquiry is a bucket of whitewash thrown over what everyone knew in 2002-03



Protesters outside the Chilcot Inquiry

The political and moral level of this government is starkly revealed by the remark of Foreign Secretary David Miliband about the Chilcot Inquiry on the Iraq War. He said it would be like the 1983 "gold standard" Franks report into the Falklands War. This was a report that the former (right wing) Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan described at the time as "a bucket of whitewash".

And that is exactly what the Chilcot Inquiry is too.

Indeed, given its remit and procedures it could not be anything else. An agreement between Sir John Chilcot and the government gives the cabinet secretary a veto on what information the investigation can make public. Testimony that might "cause harm or damage to the public interest" can be withheld. Questions have to be submitted so that they can be answered in advance.

Can Blair be forced to reveal the memo written in January 2003 by his foreign policy adviser Sir David Manning, which reveals that he and George Bush had already decided to invade Iraq whatever the intelligence and whatever happened at the UN? The answer is no.

So far the inquiry has only confirmed what was widely known - that most of the higher up US ser-

vice and ambassadors believed that an invasion would be of "questionable legitimacy" under international law, were unhappy with it, and thought of resigning over it.

A day or so before Blair gives evidence, Lord Goldsmith, the government's chief law officer, will be called. On 7 March 2003 he warned that an invasion would be illegal. After heavy pressure, he submitted advice that Blair still considered "too equivocal". But after 10 days he was browbeaten into submission. Blair was thus able to claim that it was "very clear" that the war was legal. But there are unlikely to any major surprises in his testimony because Goldsmith is an already tainted and discredited figure, unlikely to further testify to his own shame.

When prime ministers set up such inquiries, they always choose ruling class trustees. Every one of the four previous Iraq inquiries (Hutton, Butler, ISC, FASC) failed to come up with anything substantial. Worse they often concentrated on indicting those who had investigated or revealed the conspiracy against the democratic majority opposed to the war.

For example, Lord Hutton was chosen to investigate Dr David Kelly's dubious suicide in the aftermath of the revelation that he was the source of the assertion that Wastax Campbell had "sexed up"

the "Dodgy Dossier" that Blair used to justify the war. Instead Hutton put Andrew Gilligan, the BBC journalist involved - indeed the BBC itself - under the cosh.

Sir John Chilcot himself is a civil servant responsible for dealing with police and security at the Home and Northern Ireland offices and a "staff counsellor" to MI6 between 1999 to 2004. In choosing his team he stated, he wanted only people "with experience of the workings of government from the inside".

Thus the outcome and the course of this inquiry cannot be in doubt. Every fact of importance was known in 2003 when two million people in London marched against the war. There were no weapons of mass destruction - Hans Blix, head of the UN inspectors, said so openly. There was not even the slightest evidence that Saddam Hussein had any connections to Al Qaeda or planned any "terrorist attacks on the West".

No, the reason was much simpler and millions knew it then and know it still. This was an imperialist war, launched in the interests of asserting US and UK domination over the oil rich Middle East and to "shock and awe" anyone who tried to stand up to them. In this it failed. But it did succeed in covering Blair and all his supporters with an indelible infamy.

**WORKPLACE**

# Support action to defend steel jobs on Teesside

Crunch time is approaching for a community and union campaign to save steel production in Redcar. *Bernie McAdam* believes a national strike and site occupation are key tactics

**M**anufacturing on Teesside has been mauled during the recession. Last year saw hundreds of chemical industry jobs lost at Invista, Dow, Croda, Artenius, Petroplus and Elementis. Then Corus Teesside Cast Products was set to close with the loss of 1,700 jobs at the end of January. A union campaign, involving thousands of Teessiders, won a reprise – but only till the end of February.

Corus bosses are making their workers pay for the collapse of the world steel market. Over 8,000 jobs have been axed over the last year. The threat to Redcar takes this attack to a new level. The ripping up of a 10-year contract was the excuse to mothball the plant.

But Tata, which owns Corus, continues to make money – \$2.13 billion before tax in 2008-09.

Greedy it is now out to axe the least profitable parts.

Local Labour MPs and trade union leaders from Community, Unite and GMB have made frantic pleas to Gordon Brown and Lord Mandelson. There is speculation that the Government could broker a deal to rescue the plant.

While piling the pressure onto Labour in this general election year is crucial, especially as it tries to win back the loss of its core working class vote, this is not the tried and tested route to success. The Labour government will always respect the market first.

**Action**

On the other hand, action would concentrate minds wonderfully at Whitehall. The unions should be demanding the nationalisation of

the plant and the whole steel industry without compensation to the owners and that it be placed under workers' control. If the government can bail out the banks then they can save our steel jobs.

Michael Leahy, General Secretary of Community, has said, "The lack of honest talk from Tata Corus over alternatives to mothballing its Teesside operations may provoke an industrial confrontation." Lack of honest talk? Job cuts are the reason we need a strike! Organise a national steel strike now before it's too late.

Militant action aimed at what is necessary to win – whether it is legal or illegal – can force companies like Corus to back down. Look at Lindsey Oil Refinery and the truckers – they were successful because rank and file union mem-

bers didn't wait for their leaders to act but took action themselves. If steelworkers can develop independent, rank and file networks across the unions and sites then they can also win.

There has been talk of an occupation of the Redcar plant. This would make a marvellous rallying point. Workers would have to decide on the need to "tap the furnace" in any such action and keep it ticking over to prevent long-term damage. Notwithstanding that, an occupation would put pressure on union leaders to call a strike. It would rally other Teesside workers likely to be affected by Redcar's closure.

• The Middlesbrough unions have organised a demo on 13 February to protest the closure. Show your solidarity, join the march and bring your union banners.

# Fujitsu hit hard by strike

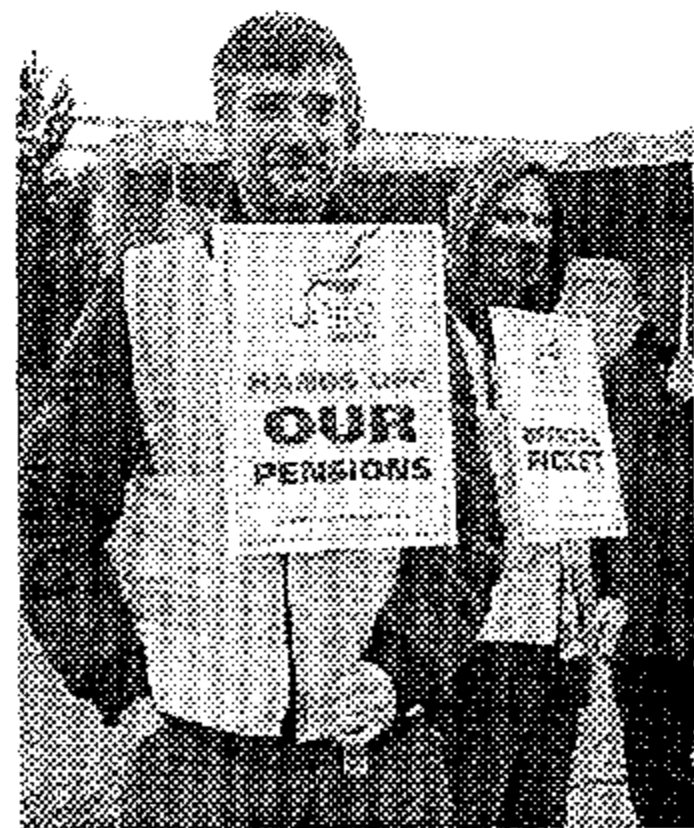
By **Jeremy Dewar**

**U**nite members have struck hard at penny pinching multinational IT firm Fujitsu, starting with one day in December and stepping up the action to two or three days a week throughout January and into February. This is the first ever national strike in a computer company and is electrifying the industry.

Fujitsu is not a company on the rocks. It made £177 million profits last year and expects £100 million more this year. It can afford to treat its employees well.

But it doesn't. Many of the strikers are effectively call centre workers earning just £1 more than the minimum wage. Strikers with over 30 years loyalty to Fujitsu say they have never seen the firm act so meanly. A culture of bullying and stop-watch time-keeping has eroded their goodwill.

What's the strike about? First, there's a pay freeze for years.



one-off bonuses replaced annual increments, this year the bonus was paltry. Next came the announcement of 1,200 job cuts, putting 6,000 workers' jobs at risk.

The final blow was the closing of the final salary redundancy scheme, which the union reckons is equivalent to a 20 per cent pay cut. This combination punch inevitably provoked a fightback.

The strike has been a magnificent

display of determination and organisation. Each day of action has seen larger pickets. Offices which could barely mount a picket line at the beginning are now surrounded by 20 strikers or more. Union membership has doubled – up to 1,450 since the strike began. Strikers have visited neighbouring workplaces, post offices and high streets, collecting money and good luck messages.

It appears that Fujitsu has backed down from seeking an injunction against the strike. The fact that it hired lawyers to break the strike shows that it is prepared to get nastier. The strikers should therefore get ready to step up their action too.

**Where next?**

Fujitsu is clearly shaken. They thought they were immune to strikes, a relic of the old rust-belt industries. The new technologies were supposed to leave all that behind. That was the hype. This is the reality. There are bosses and

workers, we will fight back.

On the eve of the first strike, Fujitsu offered a 5 per cent pay rise to around 3,000 workers, who were to lose their pensions. Rightly the workers said, too little, too late. More is possible from this super-rich company.

But to win more, they may have to up their action further – to an all out, indefinite strike. Tower Hamlets College lecturers and Leeds bin-workers won big concessions after they left the premises with no indication of when they would be back.

Of course, this means having a full discussion in every office and stepping up the solidarity work. But Fujitsu will not want to miss out on the fragile recovery. Such a strike will frighten them – and quickly.

We urge all our readers to download collection sheets and send in messages of support. Picket lines will be in place in Belfast, Manchester, Wakefield, Crewe, Stevenage and elsewhere. For more info contact [unite@unite.org.uk](mailto:unite@unite.org.uk)



# BA: world's nastiest airline

By Jeremy Drinkall

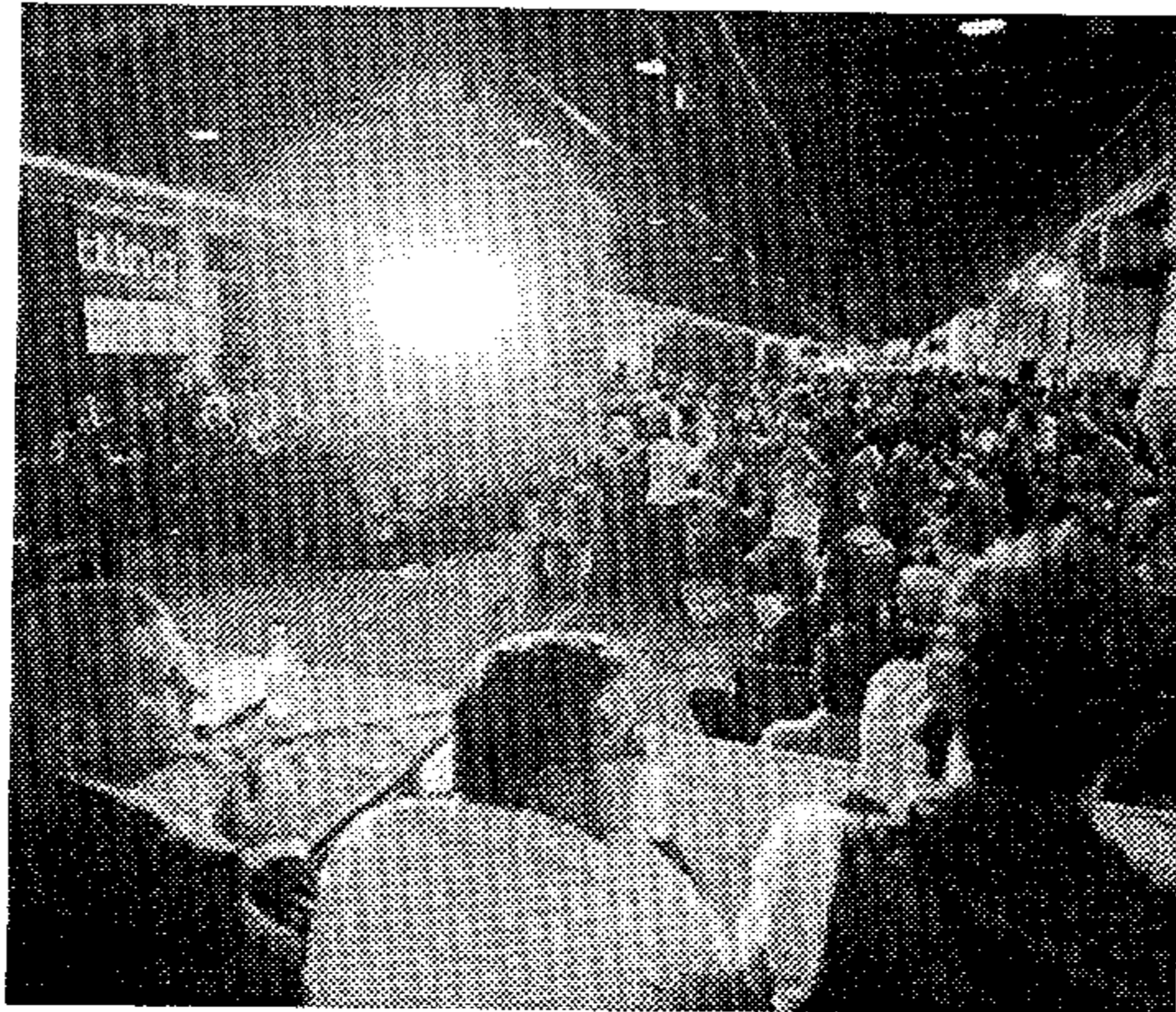
Unite is re-balloting 13,000 British Airways cabin crew members for strike action against a two-year pay freeze and a threat to halve the number of workers onboard long-haul flights. BA wants to cut 1,700 posts and turn 3,000 more into part-time positions. Strikes could start on 1 March.

BA's chief executive Willie Walsh (£735,000 a year) responded with threats to axe staff rights to discounted flights, downgrade hotel accommodation for crew working abroad, and train up new staff to work alongside scabs on strike days.

In December an unelected judge granted BA bosses an injunction, throwing out the original ballot where 92.5 per cent voted to strike on an 80 per cent turnout.

### Anti-union laws

Mrs Justice Cox ruled the ballot unlawful because Unite balloted a thousand staff who had applied for voluntary redundancy but not yet left BA. Not only were these



Mass meeting of BA Cabin crew discuss strike action

votes too few to change the result, if Unite hadn't balloted these members and BA refused their application, bosses could accuse the union of failing to ballot every member. Catch 22!

The judge gave her real reasons for her ruling: "A strike of this kind over the twelve days of Christmas

is fundamentally more damaging to BA and the wider public than a strike taking place at almost any other time of the year."

So unelected judges can throw out democratic ballots if millionaire bosses object. It is a scandal that Labour hasn't abolished the anti-union laws after 13 years

in power. Unite should demand Gordon Brown does so before the election or pull its funding.

But instead of this, Unite's Assistant General Secretary Len McCluskey has conceded to Justice Cox and the media by announcing that there will be no strikes over Easter – without so much as holding a membership debate or vote on the matter. Even the BBC's Martin Shankleman was forced to remark, "The union has given up the biggest weapon it had in its armoury to force BA to change course."

We urge every BA cabin crew member to vote "Yes" in the new ballot. A January poll shows that – unlike McCluskey, who is standing for General Secretary against rank and file candidate Jerry Hicks – a majority of Unite members would support "a strike spanning more than ten days".

We're not surprised. The question is, will Unite's leaders follow through on their members' democratic decision this time and launch a strike. BA workers need to take control of the dispute to ensure they can act, even if their leaders won't.

## As Government prepares for cuts and privatisation Vote 'Yes' for civil service strike

By Rebecca Allen, PCS member

Over 300,000 civil servants in the PCS union are balloting for strike action over plans to cut redundancy pay, the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS). In an outpouring of anger, 35,000 PCS members attended union meetings last year demanding action. The dispute could kick off with a two-day national strike in March. Now we need to deliver a massive 'Yes' vote to make it happen.

Ministers launched this attack to pave the way for massive cuts to public services after the election to pay for the bank bailout. Slashing redundancy pay will make it cheaper to sack civil servants and for companies to buy sections from a cash hungry government and run them for profit.

The billionaire-owned media portray civil servants as defending "gold-plated" salaries, pensions and redundancy packages. But in reality one in five earn less than £15,000. Comparable private sector jobs can attract up to £5,000 more. And it is mad to get rid of civil servants when unemployment is high and there are £130 billion of uncollected taxes, the vast majority owed by tax-evading companies.

As the union says, collecting these taxes is the alternative to cuts in the public sector. But Labour leaders fear alienating the super-rich.

Besides a "Yes" vote, PCS members need to lobby the NEC for effective action this time and drop its previous strategy of one-day strikes, months apart. If after two days the government doesn't back down, we should step up the struggle for

lowing through on the threat of rolling and selective strikes, up to all-out indefinite action if necessary.

### No to a two-tier workforce

Another damaging tradition of the PCS leadership, including Socialist Party NEC members, is offering a two-tier workforce as a "compromise" that ends up weakening the union. In 2005, officials agreed to a worse pension and redundancy package for new starters after 2007 – and didn't even ballot the membership!

So a PCS consultation on the CSCS found staff who joined since 2007 were angry that they were being asked to fight for rights they didn't have – forcing officials to change course and include those who joined since 2007 in the CSCS. This shows pressure from the members is essential to our PCS lead-

ers are at it again, offering to accept lower redundancy pay for new starters if current civil servants are kept on the CSCS. The fact that government has rejected this shows how radical its cuts plans must be.

Reps and members need to demand our leaders stop selling future civil servants down the river. It will entrench divisions and make it harder to get new workers to join the union or strike.

A resounding "Yes" vote should be coupled with a campaign for the same redundancy terms for all. Activists need to organise in and across our workplaces and departments to ensure rank and file control of the dispute. We can elect workplace committees to fight for the most determined strike campaign, watch our leaders, and finalities with other sections of workers.

**GENERAL ELECTION 2010**

# Class - the big issue Tories and Labour fear

Class politics is back. But the mainstream parties appear terrified of mentioning the very word. Luke Cooper argues a bit of class war is what we need

**T**his recession is often described as the most serious since the 1930s. But in fact the 4.8 per cent contraction in UK GDP in 2009 was the largest year-on-year fall since the post-war slump in 1921. With 2.5 million unemployed and millions more facing pay cuts and worsening conditions, the question of 'who should pay for the crisis' – the bosses, bankers, et al, or the working and middle classes – has become the core subject of the general election campaign.

All the parties, including those with no links to the working class, the Liberals and Tories, have to judge where to position themselves on this question, and how far they can risk tapping into popular outrage with bankers' bonuses and bailouts – without antagonising the bosses, who want sharp cuts in public spending to restore the highly indebted British treasury's fiscal position.

As a result they are all playing a game of 'smoke and mirrors', insisting they will halve the public debt while promising to protect public services like health and education. Even the Tories – a rotten capitalist party who ran public services into the ground for two decades when they were last in power – are playing it, with Cameron's election posters promising "to cut the deficit not the NHS".

But Labour, more than any other party, is caught in the contradictions of its promises. As a party with organic links to the working class, it has to get its "core vote" out if it is to stand any chance in this election.

That's why, depending on the audience and who is speaking, Labour's message keeps changing. The Gordon Brown and Ed Balls wing of the government want to counter-pose "Labour investment" to "Tory cuts", while the Mandelson right wing want to compete with the Tories and Lib Dems by promising more cuts.

The coup attempt of Balls



Postal workers at parliament - who will represent them?

Hoon and Patricia Hewitt, neither of whom are standing in the next election, may have been farcical, but it was a warning shot from Labour's right wing to Brown. They wanted to push him to fight the election on a cutting, not a spending ticket.

**Don't say which side you're on**

This wing of the Labour Party is nothing if not loyal to its principles, which could be summed up as 'serve the bosses at all costs'. And the costs could be very dear in the election, because Labour simply can't compete with the Tories on these terms.

With no links to the working class whatsoever, the Tories have less holding them back from launching a massive offensive on our services. That's why Cameron won the day at last year's CBI conference and has received three and a half times more money in donations for his election campaign than Brown. Even Alastair Campbell, a public relations man with no principles in his politics at all, recognises that the situation has changed. People are angry with the banks and the rich, so he says Labour should capitalise on it.

Brown's attack on Tory party policy before Christmas, where he denounced promises to raise the threshold for inheritance tax to £1 million as a policy "dreamed up on the playing fields of Eton", the hugely popular, time-honoured

bankers' bonuses, and the new 50 per cent tax rate for big earners over £150,000, are all attempts to present Labour as a party that offers at least some protection to working people from the crisis. The Tories denounced this as "class war" politics – and Peter Mandelson and Jack Straw were unnerved by it too.

But even the Tories' reaction was basically defensive. Instead of invoking their own class war politics they retreated behind a veil of platitudes emphasising "social justice" and "opportunity for all". This certainly contrasts with Thatcher's rhetoric in the 1980s, where she insisted there is "no such thing as society" and described unions as "the enemy within".

This is because the Tories have to tread carefully. They are an ageing reactionary party whose core values are out of touch with the majority of British society. Back in 1980 they had 1.2 million members, while today they have 270,000. They still can't pull themselves above 40 per cent in the polls – the point that's usually seen as enough to win a British election – despite thirteen years of Labour.

On this one thing only, Alastair Campbell is right – working and middle class people do not want to pay for the capitalists' crisis. Brown, Mandelson, Clegg and Cameron, are all trying to paper over this class antagonism with the language of liberal, bourgeois

are all in it together") and appear as all things, to all classes.

**Won't work**

But this can't work. Class can't be spun away – it is real. We live in a system where one part of society grows rich only by exploiting those below them. When the pie is getting smaller in an economic crisis, the toffs defend their big share of it even more aggressively.

Indeed when the press and the capitalist politicians speak of class war they think of the miners' strike, the "Winter of Discontent", or the cabin crew workers that they claim recently tried to "steal Christmas". Less attention is paid to the class war that erupts when the old-Etonians take on the "chavs"; when they start attacking the "scroungers" in the dole queue, the "greedy" public sector unions, and blame migrants for unemployment.

This is the real hypocrisy behind the shrill Tory cries of "class war". Their class is preparing for an almighty war against our jobs and services. That's why we need to challenge the Labour leaders to put their money where there mouth is and act in the interests of working class people. This will help show to millions what our real interests are and expose Brown's rotten policies.

The unions should demand that the Labour leadership immediately withdraw the troops from Afghanistan, make the super-tax on bankers' bonuses permanent, not a one off, nationalise firms facing bankruptcy to save jobs, increase – not cut – public spending with a massive programme of public work to end the crime of unemployment and pay for it by taxing the rich corporations and millionaires. By putting Labour on the spot with demands like these, we can highlight what should be done, how these leaders should act if they truly stood for us and how Blair and Brown's failures and crimes have opened the door to the Tory menace.

# Vote for Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

A new coalition will stand candidates against Labour at the General Election. Luke Cooper reports

**W**orkers Power welcomes the new political platform called the Trade Unionist and Socialists Coalition (TUSC), launched by a coalition of the Socialist Party (SP) and two union general secretaries: Bob Crow of the RMT transport union and Brian Caton of the Prison Officers' Association (POA), in personal capacity.

Its composition is broadly similar to the alliance which stood as No2EU at the European Elections in June, although this time the Communist Party of Britain, which publishes the Morning Star, and the RMT national executive, have not backed the campaign.

Its policies are an improvement on previous electoral initiatives of recent years. TUSC is opposed to the war on Iraq, privatisation of public services and "is united on the need for mass resistance to the ruling class offensive, and for an alternative programme of left-wing policies to help inspire and direct such resistance."

The statement also states a commitment to "bringing into democratic public ownership the major

companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment".

Workers Power calls on all trade unionists, workers, socialist and anti-racist campaigners to vote for the coalition where it is standing.

To take the initiative forward the organising group should open it up and invite anticapitalist and socialist organisations to stand on this common ticket. Jeremy Drinkall, a member of Workers Power and candidate for the Vauxhall constituency in south London (see below), has already written to the organisers proposing he stands under the TUSC banner and we are looking forward to their quick response.

#### Critical assessment

Given the widespread disillusionment with the Labour Party, as well as the growing numbers of workers struggles and the historic capitalist crisis, clearly an enormous potential has existed over the past year to mount a challenge to Labour.

In this context it is really quite striking how little fanfare there has been around the launch of TUSC and, indeed, how late it has been left. An RMT-backed conference on working class political representation mooted the idea that this alliance would contest the general election last November.

Despite the lack of wider support, a closed meeting of the SP with Crow and Caton launched the initiative. This certainly was not the 'open and democratic conference' to discuss launching an alternative to Labour that many on the left had pushed and hoped for. Such a conference convened last September, for example, could have rallied hundreds of militants from the strikes behind the campaign and stood scores of candidates.

But instead it looks as though the TUSC will only stand a handful of candidates. This inability to engage with and incorporate a broader layer of workers in struggle is clearly disappointing.

Unfortunately it is another example of an initiative taken behind closed doors, where the political

programme is then presented in a take-it-or-leave-it fashion.

#### Anticapitalism tops the agenda

Workers Power has energetically campaigned for a new anticapitalist party over the past period. We have collected over 400 signatures of supporters and have raised the call on demonstrations and in the unions. We believe a new workers' party is essential for the political development of the working class in Britain and want to see the party formed on clear, class struggle anticapitalist policies to fight the crisis.

In this respect, we would have liked TUSC to say outright that the capitalist system is to blame for the offensive on our jobs and services and that society needs to dump the profit logic and challenge capitalist property if the working class is to win out.

Nonetheless, TUSC does potentially present an opportunity for a united challenge to Labour at the forthcoming election. A strong vote for TUSC will underline the need for a new anticapitalist party and we urge the broader left and workers to back it at the coming election.

## Vote Anticapitalist in Vauxhall - vote Drinkall

**V**oters in the Vauxhall constituency of London will get the chance to vote against capitalism in the upcoming general election.

Jeremy Drinkall from Workers Power will be standing on an anticapitalist manifesto, saying on the streets and doorsteps that ordinary people should not pay for an economic crisis caused by the rich.

Jeremy, who is a teaching assistant at a local school, plays an active role as a

Unison shop steward in Lambeth. He has taken part in local efforts to protect council housing and is on the steering committee of the national Right to Work campaign which fights against unemployment.

In the postal strike before Christmas, Jeremy regularly went down to the picket lines at his local depot, Nine Elms, to show support for the workers.

Jeremy said: "Like the rest of us, many postal workers felt

let down by the Labour government, who don't lift a finger for working-class people. Because Labour has been such a disappointment, there's a real danger that the Tories and the far-right BNP will do well in these elections. I want to show that there is an anticapitalist alternative to poverty and racism."

Jeremy is in favour of working class action to stop job losses and cuts to our services, like health and education, which the three

main parties are planning.

He aims to stand as part of the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition, which is putting up candidates in a number of constituencies across the country.

"I'm asking for local trade unionists, political supporters and campaigning groups to get behind my candidacy. Together we can show that there is an alternative to capitalism.

"I will be fighting for that alternative - socialism."

## RIGHT TO WORK CONFERENCE

# For a rank and

The Right to Work conference, which meets in Manchester on January 30, could not come at a better time, argues Lambeth Unison delegate Jeremy Drinkall

This is an ideal time for a rank and file conference. The great financial crash of 2007-08 has been followed by the longest and deepest recession since the Second World War. The bosses, and the Labour Government that serves them, are hell bent on make the working class pay the cost of bailing out their system. Workers in the years ahead face an alternative; resist or see our jobs, pensions, social services wiped out and real wages slashed.

And already there is resistance and a few victories. Just look at the 92 per cent vote of 13,000 British Airways cabin crew against the company's plans to impose as many as 4,900 job losses by 1 April. A 12-day strike over the Christmas holiday period might have cost BA between 20 and 30 million pounds a day. BA was on the ropes, so a reactionary judge took away the workers right to strike by ruling the ballot invalid. Nevertheless they are balloting again and could strike as early as 1 March.

Then there was the first strike in the IT sector. 454 Fujitsu workers took nine days of action by the end of last month and are planning another three this month. They are fighting plans for 1000 job losses, extension of a pay freeze and the closure of the final salary pension scheme. Sodhexo catering workers in North Devon NHS Trust, denied a pay rise for three years, have notched up a victory. Then there is the PCS national strike ballot on 4 February against the abolition of the civil service compensation scheme.

True, resistance has not yet developed into a class-wide counter-attack. This is due in no small measure to the fact that most union leaders have applied the brakes whenever they could in order to prop up the embattled Labour government.

In the run-up to an election the leaders of the big unions, especially in the public sector, will do all they can to head off strikes embarrassing for Brown. But in private companies, as the economy picks up and profits start to recover, workers will feel more confidence to fight job losses and cuts in wages and pension. In the public service, whoever wins the election, workers will face the biggest onslaught on their jobs and conditions since the early 1980s.

### Build from below

It is vital we learn the lessons from recent struggles. The biggest lesson is that we face defeat if we leave the leadership of struggles to the full time officials, who repeatedly sell us out or sell us short. An example of a men-



Vestas solidarity movement demands nationalisation

umental sell-out was the action of Unite full-time conveners and national officials who did nothing to defend the jobs of 850 agency workers at the Cowley BMW mini plant.

An example of the "sell-short" was CWU leader Billy Hayes in the post after militant rank and file action in London and elsewhere had management on the ropes. The November Interim Agreement, settled for by the executive, led to few improvements in some offices, but by calling off the action without a binding permanent agreement they doomed posties to another bitter battle when management returns to the attack, as they surely will.

Another example, the British Airways cabin crew dispute where branch militants won the vote for strike action but Unite leader Derek Simpson, whilst calling the judge's strike ban "a disgraceful day for democracy" simultaneously leaked to the press his view that a decision to strike at Christmas was "over the top." Now Simpson has pledged in advance that, whatever the result of the re-ballot, Unite will not call strikes over the Easter holiday period.

How can we stop this kind of sabotage? Firstly by warning that sell-outs by the officials are a real possibility at the beginning of every dispute. The syndicalists and the communists of the 1920s always said, "Watch Your Leaders". Even better would be Control your Leaders. We can do this by organising strike committees, elected by mass meetings held regularly during a dispute.

We should demand that the officials report regularly to them and that rank and file representatives are present at all negotiation and they should not be bound by secrecy or confidentiality. Lastly we need to insist that no final agreement is reached without the opportunity for discussion of it and voting on it by mass meetings of the strikers.

Another historic slogan first raised by Cl de-

side shop stewards in the First World War is a vital guide to action today. With the union officials where possible, without them where necessary. It means that not only that we need to retain or gain to control over our own disputes but to initiate them whenever the union leaders refuse to act. This not pie-in-the-sky wishful thinking, either.

A number of disputes last year started without official backing. Visteon, Vestas, Prisme... the list is quite a long one. The last two occupations started before the workers even joined a union! While the postal strike would not have gone national at all if it hadn't been for the London offices kick starting the action back in the summer of '09.

### Local Solidarity and Action Committees

By uniting rank and file militants from each and every union into local organisations that can deliver action - strikes, solidarity, demos and rallies we can help every section that takes action.

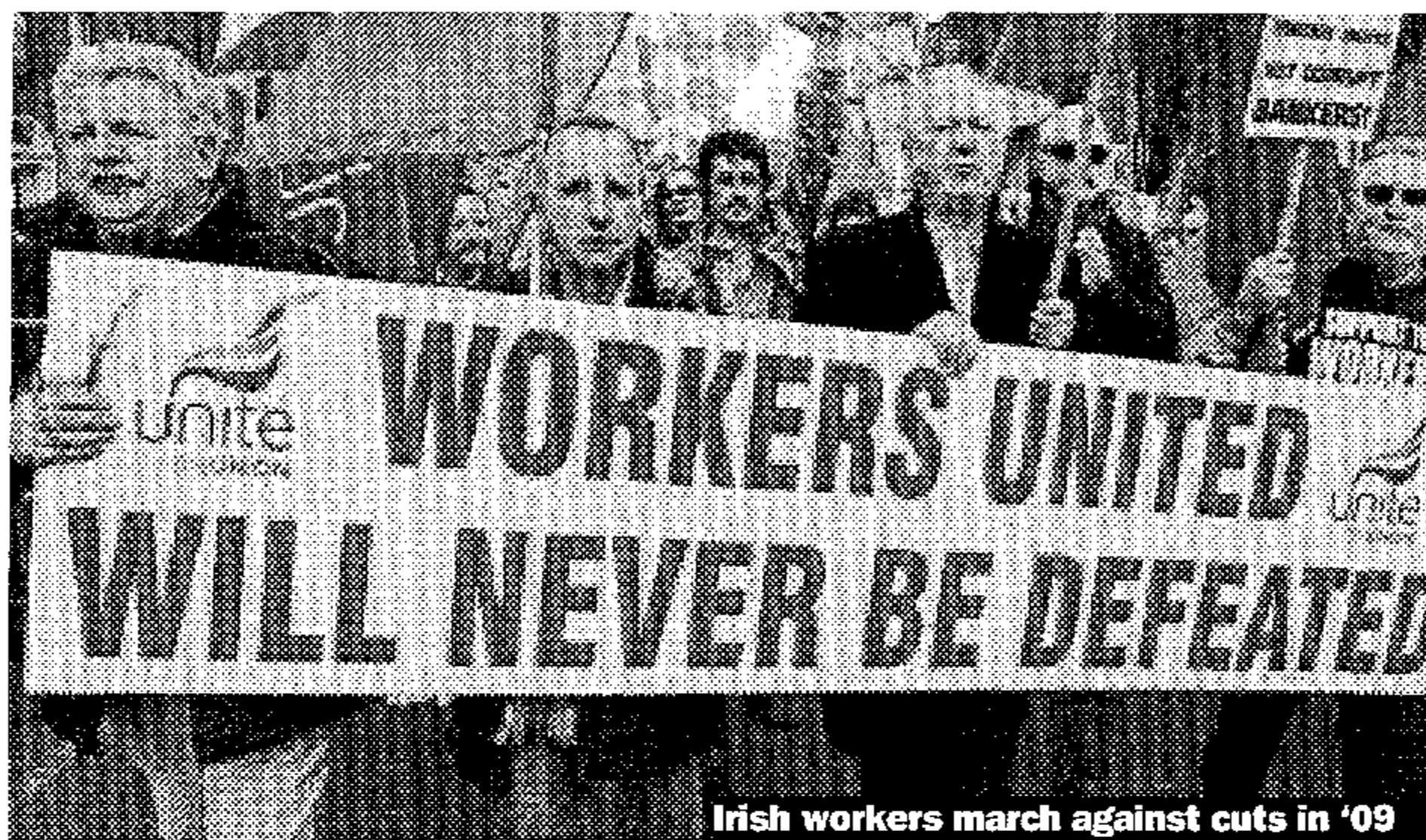
Such organisations sprang up around the Visteon and Vestas occupations and, most notably, the national post strike. In the case of Vestas, workers commented that they could not have done what they did without the solidarity groups.

Rob Williams, a Unite convenor at Linamar car parts plant, was victimised for his role in persuading Bridgend Ford workers to agree to strike in support of the Visteon workers. But not only did the threatened solidarity action force Ford to cough up the workers' redundancy money, the spirit of solidarity spread and Rob won his own job back.

Workers Power campaign to transform these solidarity groups into committees of action by not dissolving them after each dispute, but keeping them going and broadening them, drawing in delegates from as many workplaces



# rank and file movement



Irish workers march against cuts in '09

and unions as possible. Of course such committees can only survive in a period of more intense class struggle, but that's precisely what we anticipate. Indeed the 700 or so individuals and delegates coming to the Right To Work conference are testimony to the fact that thousands of activists know we are facing a co-ordinated attack and need a co-ordinated response.

The National Shop Stewards Network, for fear of offending RMT officials and due in no small part to the influence of the Socialist Party, has several times refused Workers Power's proposal to take up the slogan, 'with the union officials where possible, without them where necessary'.

Right To Work to its credit has done so, both at its founding conference last June and again at last month's steering committee. Now we have to move from words to deeds. We need to support workers once they take unofficial action, but also prepare the way for such action now. The best way to do this is to form rank and file movements democratically uniting the most far-sighted and determined militants inside every union and across the trade union movement.

## Tradition of Rank and File Organisation

There is an excellent tradition in Britain of building rank and file movements. It goes back over 100 years to the years just before and during the First World War. Union and Labour leaders called for their members to "make sacrifices" and support the mass slaughter in the trenches during the war. A network of shop stewards, directly elected representatives of the rank and file, sprang up across the country to defend the members pay conditions and oppose conscription.

In 1921 the post-war crisis hit. Workers' wages fell - by up to 24 per cent per cent by 1924. Unemployment topped two million. The right wing union leaders again hampered the

workers' fightback; union membership fell. It was in 1924, in this difficult climate, that the young communist party launched the National Minority Movement (NMM) in the unions.

The party's paper set out its aims:

"In every union the rank and file forces must be gathered

1. Around a fighting programme.
2. Around concrete demands for union consolidation and reorganisation.
3. Around the necessity for creating a new ideology amongst the union membership.
4. Around the necessity of training and developing a new leadership to replace the old."

The NMM set out to transform the local trades councils into fighting organisations of the whole labour movement, changing their constitutions to incorporate delegates from workplace committees, political organisations, co-operatives and college students, as well as union branches. It fought to have them affiliated to the TUC to make its pressure felt within the official structures.

This is a model for the committees of action we need today.

But the communists did not rest there, communist party member JR Campbell wrote:

"It should be clear to members of minority groups, however, that their task consists of something more than demanding slightly higher wages than the officials are prepared to demand... That 'something more' is the popularisation of the conception of trade unionism, not merely as a reformist force under capitalism, but as a revolutionary instrument for participating in the struggle for power, and after the struggle for power, playing a part in the management of industry."

This was not just for the contemplation of party members or lengthy articles either.

"Every candidate for even the most insignificant post," wrote Campbell, should stand on

a revolutionary platform. While the communists supported the left officials against the right and strove to transform the "muddled and incomplete left wing viewpoint of the more progressive leaders into a real revolutionary viewpoint", they warned against reliance on them and never forgot their "main activity must be devoted to capturing the masses".

The NMM fought for concrete slogans, like unemployed benefits set at the minimum wage and a six hour day, as well as society-wide demands, like workers' control of industry and a workers' government, fully utilizing the method of transitional demands. But this did not limit its growth.

By 1925 its conference gathered delegates representing 750,000 members. It played a massive role in revitalizing a defeated, shrinking and demoralized union movement and paved the way for the 1926 General Strike.

Unfortunately, the NMM did not survive the political degeneration of the Communist International into Stalinism and it failed to warn workers of the inevitable betrayal of the TUC in the General Strike. That degeneration was not inevitable for many reasons, but in any case it doesn't erase the positive legacy. It is a model of what can be achieved today, given the political will. Rank and file organisation today has to be political, has to be militantly anticapitalist. It should play a leading role in the building of a new, anticapitalist, working class party in Britain and internationally too.

## Right To Work

The Right To Work conference has the opportunity to take the first steps towards building a real rank and file organisation. We want a rank and file movement capable of acting independently of the officials whenever they obstruct the fightback and we want to say this openly and explicitly.

Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leaders have in the past argued that they cannot "substitute themselves for a non-existent movement". But this misses the point. We can in a measured and realistic way take steps to bring such a movement into view - but we have to state our aims clearly and popularise them among the already existing layer of militants looking for big answers to the capitalism's big crisis.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Programme, we must "strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions" and create "independent militant organisations" but do so without "flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions".

We will over the coming months and years have plenty of opportunities to advance the workers' movement in Britain.

Let's seize them.

**UK ECONOMY**

# Slow, painful recovery - massive cuts on way

Both Labour and Tories are playing a game of smoke and mirrors with the electorate, covering up the huge cuts they will introduce in office, argues *Keith Spencer*

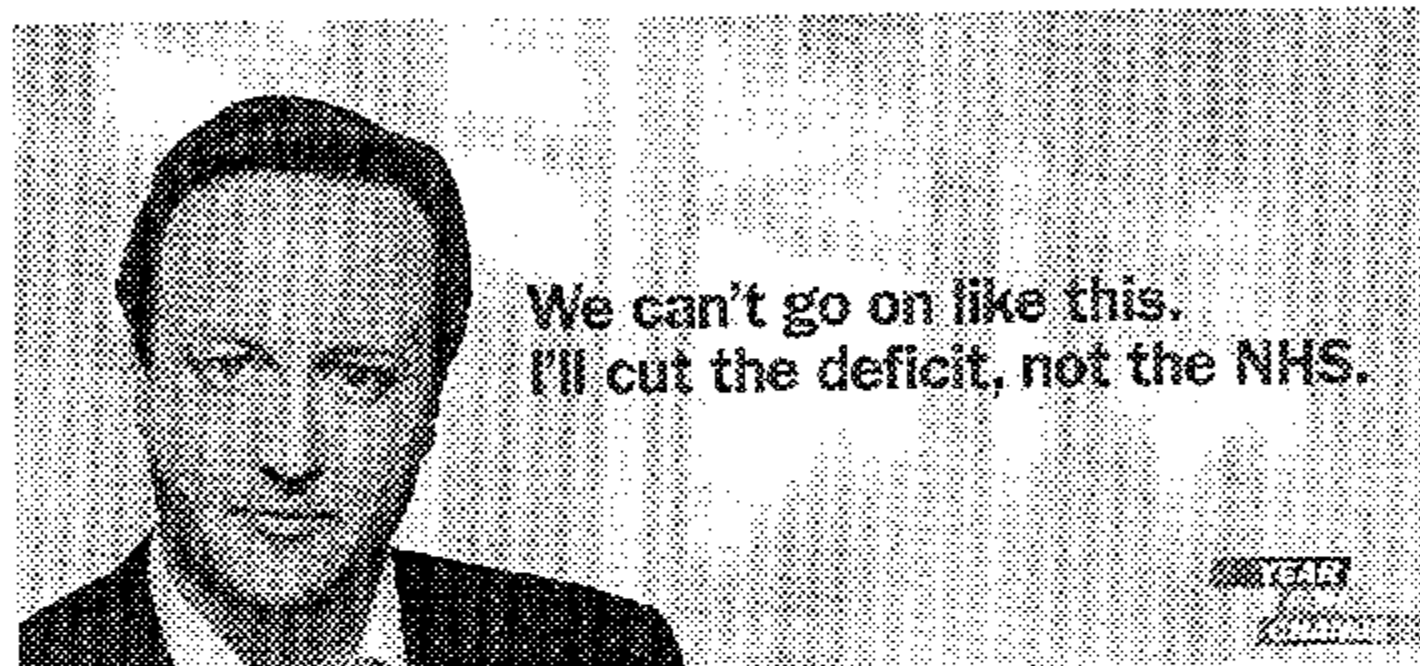
The UK economy has officially come out of recession. Unemployment has fallen for the first time in two years. Consumers spent more than expected in the Christmas sales, the housing market appears buoyant and manufacturing companies are reporting levels of optimism not seen for more than two years.

But the recovery will be a long, arduous process. Head of the Bank of England Mervyn King recently said: "The patience of UK households is likely to be sorely tried over the next couple of years."

Unemployment is expected to rise again soon, pensions are at risk and consumer spending has reached its limit with people trying to pay off debts, while inflation has also started to rise and is now at 2.9 per cent. If left unchecked, inflation could choke off any recovery.

Then there is the debt problem. The amount the government will borrow this year to fund its expenditure will be about £175bn. This is a big increase over the past two years and can, if left to rise, undermine the recovery.

As neither party wants to recoup this money through significantly higher taxes on the rich and corporations, they are determined to make cuts in public expenditure to reduce the deficit. The debate



Tory lie machine goes into overdrive to win election

between them is about the speed and where the cuts fall.

**Labour cuts**

Gordon Brown says the government will halve the deficit within four years, cutting about £78bn. In his pre-budget report in December, Darling put forward plans to bring finances under control by 2016 and reduce their share of GDP. But he promised some real increases in spending on schools up to 2014 and to match NHS spending with inflation until 2014-5. But apart from reducing waste and public sector wage restraint, he said little about where the cuts will fall.

We can expect cuts to the benefits bill. The Welfare Reform Bill is a weapon to drive people who are ill into work. Spending on rail, buses and affordable houses will all be hit too. Labour has already overseen pri-

vate sector inroads into the NHS such as PFI, and more will follow. And Labour will target education and health cuts later when the economy has fully recovered, with sharp cuts in higher education already underway.

**Tory cuts**

David Cameron and the rest of the shadow cabinet have refused to detail their cuts. The reason is simple - if they were upfront about the full scale of the cuts they will introduce, it would hit their election chances. But they have given some clues.

Cameron launched his campaign this year with airbrushed posters saying he will cut the deficit not the NHS. Despite this pledge, Private Eye reports he has been meeting with Nurses for Reform, a group of Tories dedicated to privatising the NHS.

His shadow chancellor, George Osborne, talks of immediate cuts after taking office, but has only come up with proposals to hold down workers' wages in the public sector, remove child tax credits for those on £50,000 or more.

Osborne has in the past been a cheerleader for the Irish economy. In December, Ireland introduced a budget that saw:

- Public sector workers had pay cuts (not "just" a pay freeze)
- Child, unemployment, disability benefits were reduced
- Health charges were introduced for a raft of charges for health services and a 50 per cent hike in the cost of prescriptions

The budget was a huge attack on public services and a big transfer of wealth from workers to the rich.

And just look at the last Tory government that faced a serious recession: Margaret Thatcher's in 1979.

State spending was slashed, VAT was raised but the rich had their tax rates reduced and controls on the City of London were removed. The result was a collapse in manufacturing industry, unemployment rising to over 3 million, the cowering of the unions and a big transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich.

These are the sort of policies Cameron and the Tories have in store for us.

Let's be clear, that Labour's pro-boss policies have paved the way for the Tories to be on the verge of winning the election. Labour has attacked workers, privatised industry, pursued wars in alliance with a reactionary US government and actively ruled on the behalf the City of London and multinationals. We should demand that even at this late hour they should drop their pro-boss agenda and adopt policies to help workers.

But we should not let the election year dampen our fighting spirit. The best way to ensure the defeat of the coming austerity cuts is to fight now to build up our strength, organisation and confidence to take on the new, cutting government.

## THE UK DEBT CRISIS

• The public sector net debt now stands just over three-fifths of gross domestic product (GDP), £870bn, according to the latest January release from the Office of National Statistics. Compare this with about 36.7% of GDP in the third quarter 2007 (before the recession began). The public sector net debt is the total amount that the government owes to its creditors, which can be very rich individuals, financial companies such as pensions funds, even other countries.

• The public sector net borrowing requirement up to December 2009 was just under £120m, it is expected to be about £175m by the end of the fiscal year in April. This is the amount that the cover needs to borrow in anyone year to pay for its

expenditure. In the earlier part of the there was a surplus. (Source ONS, Public sector finances, January 2010).

The government needs to pay for these debt, especially the annual interest charges. It can borrow more money to pay of the existing creditors but this will push up interest rates. Or it can raise taxes and cut spending, which threatens reducing demand and choking off any economic improvement. The bosses are demanding that the government cuts spending. This means the cuts are in services for workers: forcing some on benefits to take up low paid jobs, reducing wages for others through freezes or transferring public services into private hands where profits can be gained.

**OBAMA**

# Will Obama's bank reforms stop crises?

Wall Street is furious over Obama's proposed new banking laws. *Keith Spencer* looks at the furore

President Obama has declared war on Wall Street, saying that "never again will the American taxpayer be held hostage by banks that are too big to fail". He has proposed new laws to regulate banks, splitting off high street banking functions from more risky investment and trading activities.

These would prevent banks owning or working with hedge funds, stop them using deposit accounts - i.e. our money - to fund 'proprietary trading' (the speculative buying and selling of financial instruments for profit), and exclude high street banks from involvement in mergers and acquisitions (the buying and selling of whole companies).

But beyond this, the plan remains very vague. Even so, Wall Street has reacted with panic, with the Dow Jones market index falling by 5.2 per cent in three days.

Obama's strong rhetoric over

his banking proposals - declaring that "if these folks want a fight, it's a fight I'm ready to have" - is clearly a response to the loss of the Massachusetts to the Republicans in the recent senate election. This was a massive blow to the Democrats, as it was a previously safe seat in their historic East Coast heartland.

It follows a huge, right wing populist campaign against Obama's health reforms by the Republicans, who succeeded in channelling anger at the banks, unemployment and recession into attacks on taxation and big government.

Only the week before, Obama had demanded that the banks repay \$120 billion given to them during the credit crisis. "We want our money back, and we're going to get it... My determination to achieve this goal is only heightened when I see reports of massive profits and obscene bonuses at some of the very firms

who owe their continued existence to the American people."

But the tax he proposed to recoup this cash is stretched out over 10 years! This prompted the Wall Street Journal to label it, "Obama's gentle bank tax".

Then, adding insult to injury, the banks announced record profits. The Wall Street Journal estimates that pay on Wall Street reached a record \$145 billion last year - the year of the biggest crisis since the 1930s! JP Morgan had \$11.7 billion in profits and paid staff \$27 billion, while Goldman Sachs earned \$13.39 and paid out of \$16.9 billion.

## The US Glass-Steagall Act of 1933

The proposed regulations, however, fail to touch the fundamentals of the system that brought about the crisis in the first place - much like previous attempts to legislate against crisis.

They have been likened to the Glass Steagall Act, introduced by President Roosevelt in 1933 as part of his "New Deal" measures to combat the Great Depression. This also prohibited high street banks from owning other financial institutions, like insurance or investment companies, or from being involved in speculative activity. It also had the aim of heading off popular anger.

US Trotskyists at the time explained how the capitalist state was reining in some capitalists for the benefit of the whole ruling class:

"Individual capitalists have got to be taught that they must occasionally give up a few sweetmeats as individuals to preserve the basic interests of their class as a whole, and its position. And the state - in the days of monopoly capitalism most directly representative of the class as a whole - will be their teacher."

The act lasted until 1999, when it was repealed under Democratic President Bill Clinton, whose wife and many of whose advisers now work for Obama. But it did not shorten the Great Depression, prevent the recessions of the 1970s and early 1980s, or prevent the collapse

in 2000 of the much-vaunted "dot-com" bubble of the late 1990s.

## Socialism not populism

It has been proven time and again that capitalism cannot legislate itself out of crisis.

The massive expansion of credit because of demand from capitalist and consumers alike; the expansion of various forms of speculation, when sufficient profits can't be realised through production - this is the dynamic we have seen over the last decade with booming equity and property markets.

Moreover, the capitalists always seek new and ever more intricate ways to bet on the future moment of prices - in this boom taking the form of new markets in the most apparently 'sophisticated' derivative instruments. This is what Marx referred to as the "insane" forms of money that get out of control at the end point of a cycle.

While socialists should shed no tears for the bankers if these proposals go ahead - in fact, we will enjoy their misfortune and participate along with millions of others in expressing anger at their greed and indifference - we must point out that Obama's act will do nothing to help the masses impoverished by the recession. The workers don't need a watered down New Deal or other tokenistic measures - we need investment in schools, hospitals, and public works, funded by taxing the rich, to end the scandal of unemployment.

Indeed socialists should demand that the banks, finance companies and all the big corporations are taxed to the hilt. The money raised by taking their profits and bonuses should be used to stop evictions, job losses, and fund full and unending benefits, decent minimum wage, free healthcare for all and pull the troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq.

In short, we want measures that actually challenge the bosses' control over our lives. We should also demand the nationalisation of the banks without compensation and the creation of a state bank-

## Demagogic Republicans attack health reform

Obama's planned health reforms were always limited and insufficient proposals, offering much less than the UK's NHS, but they would have given greater health care cover to the third of American's who currently have no insurance.

The right wing campaign against it in the US was incredible for its lies and demagoguery - invoking images of "death committees" of bureaucrats deciding the fate of patients (as opposed to being decided by an insurance company). Obama should have known that rational argument doesn't count for much in American politics - he is now obviously trying to turn the tables by invoking popular anger against the banks.

American socialists must also seek to tap into and express this feeling, and direct it not against Wall Street alone, but the whole capitalist class. A new workers' party in the USA could take the fight to the right wing populists and build a mass movement based not on lies and prejudice but on the real needs of the working class majority.

# Elections expose need

On the last weekend of campaigning before Sri Lanka's Presidential election on 26 January, *Peter Main* spoke to PD Saranapala of the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka (SPSL) and National Secretary of the Joint Health Workers' Union about the election and the SPSL's intervention

**Peter Main (PM), Workers Power: Why did President Mahinda Rajapakse call the election two years early – surely he was in a strong position after the war?**

PD Saranapala (PDS), SPSL: Yes, certainly he was but he also knew it would not last. The war has to be paid for and Sri Lanka has been hit hard by the global crisis. Rajapakse thought he could take victory for granted on the basis of the wave of Sinhalese-Buddhist chauvinism that the government whipped up during the war.

**PM: Where does General Sarath Fonseka come into this?**

PDS: Fonseka was in overall command against the Tamil Tigers and Rajapakse saw him as a threat, so weakened him by appointing him Chief of the Defence Staff. When Fonseka saw his new post was just an honorary position, he resigned and took the opportunity to stand as a candidate in the election.

At the same time, the two main opposition parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the People's Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - JVP), had no credible candidates themselves, so they joined forces behind the General.

**PM: Is this just a matter of personal ambition or are there real policy differences behind it?**

PDS: Both of them stand for Sinhalese chauvinism and, of course, both have the blood of hundreds of thousands of Tamils and Sinhalese, civilians and soldiers on their hands. Fonseka has powerful backing from people who want an end to a government controlled by the Rajapakse family. Ironically, both are trying to win support from the Tamil minority.

Domestically, there is no difference between them. Both are vague on policy because they both are planning a really harsh budget.

**PM: Are they the main candidates?**

PDS: Yes but the election has opened up the political arena. Most important for us has been the emergence of an independent Tamil candidate, MK Sivajilingam. The main Tamil political organisation, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), decided to back Fonseka, but Sivaji's decision has challenged such unprincipled manoeuvring.

He has campaigned with Vickramabahu Karunaratne of the Broad Front, arguing for a new political initiative to unite, as he puts it, the north and south of the island.

**PM: During the war, the SPSL took an active part in the Broad Front. Why have you not supported the Broad Front's "common candidate" – Karunaratne (Bahu) – who is a leading member of the Left Front and the Fourth International section in Sri Lanka?**

PDS: The SPSL was in favour of standing a single candidate, but not just as a protest. The different groups in the Broad Front - Maoists, ex-JVP members, civil rights activists, as well as the Left Front - all took a principled position in defence of Tamil rights and against the chauvinism and denial of democratic rights during the war. That was not easy - at times it was dangerous - and we saw the election as an opportunity to take that forward politically.

We proposed a common candidate on a basic socialist programme that included defence of the Tamils' right to self-determination and demilitarisation of the Tamil regions, as well as demands for the repeal of the Emergency Powers, abolition of the executive Presidency, defence of workers' and farmers' living standards, nationalisation of industry under workers' control, the formation of workers' and farmers' councils to coordinate struggles, and

## Whichever candidate wins will be a threat to

### Socialist Party of Sri Lanka statement on the 2010 election

President Mahinda Rajapakse planned to benefit from his victory in the war but his plan is falling apart. Sri Lankan society is facing economic problems that his policies cannot solve. That is why he called the election early: he knows that in two years' time the situation is likely to be even worse and he would stand little chance of re-election! His plan to march from victory in the war to victory in the polls has been upset by General Sarath Fonseka's opposition. The military victory led only to division between the President and the General.

Whoever wins the election, the situation for the people will continue to worsen. The workers and poor farmers are already facing falling living standards - and the situation is

set to get worse. Previously, the government said that rising prices were caused by the costs of the war. They promised that if people tightened their belts to win the war, then peace would bring prosperity and better living standards - but this has proved to be a lie.

Because of the global economic crisis, the government has negotiated an IMF loan of \$2.6 billion but only on the condition that public subsidies for social programmes are withdrawn and public sector workers' wages are cut. The government has not dared to present its budget to Parliament before the election - but we can be certain that they are planning sweeping cuts once the election is over.

The government is still financing an army of 300,000 soldiers, which made up 25 per cent of the state budget during the war. Now, on top of that, debts to foreign agen-

cies are reported to equal 90 per cent of national income. People are already facing severe hardships and the government's popularity has tumbled.

But General Fonseka does not have any plans for solving the crisis, either. His sole statement is that he stands for "democracy, discipline and opposition to corruption". It would be an illusion to expect more democracy from the General than we had from Rajapakse, as both of them stand for the implementation of neoliberal policies. Let us not forget that he General was the man responsible for the crushing of the Tamil people as the President's chosen military leader. Although there are no clear statistics for the number of dead and injured, these two men are responsible for the deaths of at least 75,000, including at least 10,000 non-combatant civilians.

### Presidency threatens democracy

The presidential system has trampled on the democratic and human rights of the Sri Lankan people. During the war, the presidential system was used to crush democratic rights through the Emergency Powers Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Rajapakse used these Acts to suppress free media and restrict citizens' democratic rights. Hence, it is very strange that the People's Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - JVP) and the United National Party (UNP) expect to defend democracy by relying on an army general.

Fonseka's promises are just the same as before. What his real programme is we still do not know. He says that his economic policy will be based on an "open economy and privatisation", which is just a continuation of the economic policies



# for new workers' party



Socialist Party of Sri Lanka campaigning

the need for a workers' and farmers' government that could use economic planning to begin transforming the economy and society.

#### PM: And what was the response to that?

PDS: Many comrades, including Bahu, said they agreed with the demands but thought the call for councils and a workers' and farmers' government was too advanced. Their idea was simply to maximise the anti-chauvinist vote.

For us, that meant a wasted opportunity – instead of protesting, we should be explaining the need for a socialist way out of the crisis in Sri Lanka. That is why we have not supported

Bahu's candidacy.

#### PM: How have you intervened into the election?

PDS: We have distributed tens of thousands of leaflets in both Sinhalese and Tamil at our own meetings and union meetings around the country. We have also spoken at Left Front election meetings in many different towns.

For example, our General Secretary, Mahinda Devege, spoke alongside Bahu and Sivaji at meetings in Ragala Town, Kandy, Mennar, Vavuniya and Jaffna, as well as Colombo, which attracted hundreds of people.

#### PM: What has been the mood at those meetings?

PDS: The meetings have been very lively – there's an appetite for politics now the war is over. Many people in the Tamil areas say they like the joint campaign, but they'll vote Fonseka to get rid of Rajapakse. But they don't trust Fonseka and there is growing support for an alliance of the Sinhalese left and the Tamils. But the Left Front campaign is not giving a socialist answer to this need for a new party.

#### PM: And what about the response to the SPSL's abstention position?

PDS: Again, many argue to vote for Fonseka, despite his record. But in workplace and union meetings they support our call for a new working class party. Some in the Left Front have shown an interest in the idea of a new, Fifth International – perhaps because of Chavez' speech.

#### PM: What will be your priorities after the election?

PDS: The campaign has become increasingly violent and five people have been killed. Rajapakse's people are worried they might not win. Whoever wins, there may be a clampdown to "maintain order". But parliamentary elections are due in three months. If they go ahead, that will open up the political arena further. We will argue that the Broad Front should stand candidates on the kind of action programme we proposed for this election. That could be an important step towards a new, mass working class party.

## democracy - let us fight for socialism!

of the past 30 years. We have enough evidence that these policies cannot help the majority of workers and farmers. There is only one conclusion: whoever wins the presidential election, the people will face the same economic crisis!

#### A programme for socialism

The workers and farmers of Sri Lanka can expect a worsening situation. Faced with this, the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka (SPSL) proposed to other socialist organisations and opponents of chauvinism that there should be a common candidate to stand in the election on the basis of a transitional action programme. We proposed that the election campaign be used to take forward the building of an independent workers' party based on a socialist programme. That is the task of all revolutionaries right now.

Unfortunately, our proposals fell

on deaf ears. Although there is a common "left" candidate, Vickramabahu Karunaratne, both he and his electoral ally, Sivajilingam, have chosen to use the campaign for little more than a protest against the two main candidates. Certainly there is much to protest against, but the workers and farmers need more than protest – they need a new fighting party. That is why the SPSL will continue to call for the building of a new workers' party based on a revolutionary action programme:

- Withdraw all military forces from the Tamil lands; full freedom of movement for all refugees currently held in camps; resettlement of all Tamil communities under the administration of elected workers' and farmers' councils.
- Resolve the national question by recognising the right of self-determination of the Tamil people.

- For an emergency programme of reconstruction in the war zones under the democratic control of the communities involved.
- Stop the abductions and killings by government-backed death squads. For a workers' inquiry into all disappearances and abductions.
- Repeal the Emergency Powers and Prevention of Terrorism Acts – for the restoration of a free media.
- For price controls on everyday necessities; for a sliding scale of wages to protect income against inflation as calculated by the workers' own organisations.
- Recognition of full citizenship and civil rights for all communities and equal access to all public amenities, irrespective of language, ethnicity or creed.
- Tax the rich and the big corporations to fund the extension of health, education, housing and

transport services under workers' control.

- Nationalise the assets of the multinational corporations and impose controls on the transfer of funds out of the country.
- Coordinate the struggles of the workers and the oppressed through the building of workers' and farmers' councils. For a workers' and farmers' government responsible to a national congress of workers' and farmers' councils.

We call on all the socialist organisations, the trade unions and all those who oppose chauvinism and communalism to join with us during the presidential election, and in the struggles that will follow it, to build a new, mass workers' party committed to the overthrow of capitalism in Sri Lanka as part of a new, Fifth International, a world party of socialist revolution.

More at [fifthinternational.org](http://fifthinternational.org)

**IRAN**

# Protesters risk lives again to confront the regime

After months of struggle in the face of bullets prison and torture, Iranian protesters are still taking to the streets to challenge President Ahmadinejad. By Christopher Newcombe

Protests first erupted back in June, when opposition candidates accused president Ahmadinejad of rigging his re-election. These spread, sparking an uprising unprecedented since the 1979 revolution. The movement quickly moved from protesting the election result to challenging the theocratic regime itself. Despite months of savage repression which initially managed to halt the protests, episodic outbreaks have continued.

In December alone there were three major flare ups. On 7 December, a traditional day of student protest known as 16 Azar commemorating the murder of three students under the hated Shah's rule, thousands of students staged an anti-government protest in Tehran – this despite the fact that universities have been special targets of the murderous Basij militia.

Then the funeral of dissident cleric Montazeri on 21 December in Qom saw hundreds of thousands of mourners transform the event into a mass demonstration against the regime. A week later martial law was declared in his home town Najafabad – the first case of martial law in Iran since 1978. On 27 December, the holy day Ashura, mass protests again erupted in the capital Tehran and throughout the country.

The regime has repeatedly threatened a crackdown, causing fears of a Tiananmen Square type bloodbath, the latest threat coming on January 15 from Iran's police chief Moghaddam, who said the era of "mercy" was over. Given that "mercy" has included savage beatings and shooting of protesters, detention, torture, and even attacks on funerals of the killed and invasions of mosques, these threats cannot be ignored. But it is significant that this ultimate crackdown has not come as yet.

One reason is the movement's massive scale and the involvement of various sectors of society: its militancy and the growing bravery, with people now ready to give their lives

have evolved into demands for an end to theocratic rule and for democracy.

But mass mobilisation alone cannot protect an unarmed movement from a ruthless regime with a heavily armed state machine.

However the regime itself is deeply divided. Indeed it was divisions within the establishment, which became open with the disputed election, which first emboldened Iranians to take to the streets last June. Mousavi and Karroubi, the opposition candidates, are both part of the Islamic Republic's establishment. Mousavi was prime minister from 1981-9, a period of mass slaughter of workers in the Iran-Iraq war, as well as bloody internal repression.

The recent split had nothing to do with Mousavi wanting real democratic change. Rather it was and remains a fight between rival factions of a ruling caste.

One factor is the increasing power being taken by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, a military force which is also a major economic power, controlling around a third of the economy, and which has increased its share recently with the purchase of a major stake in telecommunications. Another is the increasing privatisation of Iran's large public sector, ordered by supreme leader Khamenei in 2006, which has since accelerated.

Not surprisingly, this leads to conflict within the elite, as some are 'winners' and some are 'losers'.

For over half a year, therefore, and still today, Iranian society has been rocked with mass protests demanding fundamental change, whilst its rulers have suffered open and deepening splits, unable to act – either to grant concessions or to crack down on the democracy movement. One factor that is missing here is mass, militant involvement of workers, which would transform the political situation and open a period of revolutionary crisis. The question would then be posed: which class can overthrow the regime, and which class should rule Iran?

Democracy is not a state which



**Determined protests confront state forces**

democracy movement has not been confined to the middle classes. The involvement of youth and students has been a major feature. It is also now beyond the control of its original leadership. Indeed, most protests are now self-organising, using modern means like texting and the internet to inform and mobilise.

But key sectors, such as the oil workers, have remained on the sidelines. Whilst expressing opposition to the regime's repression of the movement, they have not yet taken strike action, which would hit Iran's weakened economy, nor staged occupations, which would challenge the regime's control and ownership of the wealth.

Mass, militant working class action could transform the Iranian democracy movement into an unstoppable force. But to succeed, strikes and occupations alone are not enough. Workers and youth must also organise their own defence, especially around workplaces and universities. And at the earliest opportunity, it would be necessary to upgrade from defence squads to an armed workers' militia. Why? Because the fascist-style Basiji must be disarmed.

Any strikes that occur need to spread, from workplace to workplace, and sector to sector, leading to a general strike. Linked to this struggle, workers and youth should form councils (which in the history of the Iranian revolution are known as Shoras) to unite and coordinate actions in factories, refineries, universities and localities – forming the basis for workers' democracy, challenging existing capitalist representatives, trades and

preparing to replace them. Meanwhile, the movement should demand that a constituent assembly be elected by all Iranians of 16 years and over.

At a certain point, the movement would need to mount a direct challenge for power. Not just the Basiji but the fighters of the much more dangerous and well-armed Revolutionary Guard would then be faced with a choice: obey their leaders and fight a civil war with fellow Iranians, or refuse to attack the people.

But to succeed in overthrowing the theocratic dictatorship would not on its own "win the battle of democracy" (in Marx's words). A democratic Iran with a capitalist economy would inevitably be subordinated to imperialism. In addition to privatisation, Ahmadinejad's government, with Khamenei's full support, is now allowing foreign companies to buy into the economy. (This ought to be enough to make those who see Ahmadinejad as 'anti-imperialist' – like Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his supporters - think twice.) This process would certainly accelerate, so long as capitalism remains intact.

In addition, therefore, to strikes, forming workers' councils and militia, Iranian workers must organise and build their own party, developing a programme for the revolutionary transformation of Iranian society – expropriating the capitalists – both private and 'state' (the Revolutionary Guard tops) – and building a democratic, secular, socialist republic. A new workers' Iran would have to reach out to workers everywhere, seeking to internationalise the revolution.

## MIDDLE EAST

# What's behind the US campaign against Yemen?

The US has used the the failed Detroit bomber as a smokescreen to increase its presence in Yemen. Marcus Halaby takes a look at the political situation

Following the failure of a plot to bomb a US flight over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009, the US, claiming that Al-Qaeda militants in Yemen organised it, has escalated its involvement in that country, sending General David Petraeus, former commander of the US troops occupying Iraq, to pledge support for Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's struggle against "Al-Qaeda terrorism".

In fact, the threat to the US from "Al-Qaeda", while real, is being used as a smokescreen for a much more important struggle to preserve Saudi power against Iran's influence over the Shi'a Muslims of the region. Saudi forces bombed a number of targets in the North of the country in November 2009, killing scores of civilians and prompting warnings by Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki against increased Saudi or US involvement.

There is, as it happens, such a thing as "Al-Qaeda" in Yemen. Its Saudi-born leader Osama bin Laden's family originate there, and his local affiliates claimed responsibility for the attack on the USS Cole during the first few weeks of the Palestinian intifada in October 2000. Nor would it be surprising if it has gained in size and influence. President Saleh's government, after all, armed and encouraged the growth of the ultra-puritan and fanatically anti-Shi'a Wahhabi religious movement (of which Al-Qaeda is only the anti-US wing) in order to prevent the secession of the (mainly Sunni) ex-Stalinist South of the country in 1994.

However this, in turn, rebounded on Saleh's regime. It increased the fears of the Shi'as in the politically dominant North of the country, where they form a majority, about the cost of Saudi Arabia's increasing influence, entirely justified given that Shi'as in Saudi Arabia, where Wahhabism is the state's official ideology, are treated like second class



Saudi troops patrol Yemen border

third class citizens.

Saudi Arabia (like Egypt and Iraq) has always been involved in Yemen's internal politics. But its now almost exclusive position dates back to the Gulf War in 1991, when Saudi Arabia punished the newly united Yemeni state for refusing to back the United Nations resolution authorising the use of force to reverse Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, by expelling 850,000 Yemeni migrant workers from its territory. This had the desired effect of bringing Yemen firmly back into the pro-Saudi (and pro-US) camp. Yemen, after all, is a country with a 40 per cent unemployment rate, with much of the population living on less than a dollar a day, with only a small and declining oil industry of its own, and highly dependent on the remittances of its emigrants abroad.

The Yemeni government's attempts since to emulate its Saudi backer in the sphere of semi-feudal religious backwardness can be seen in its abolition of the lower age limit for the marriage of women (previously set at 15, and now set at "puberty", which by religious interpretations can be as low as nine years old), and in its creation of a Saudi-style religious police, to enforce the five times daily call to prayer and the observance of "pub-

lic morals". This is all the more ironic given that President Saleh is himself a "secular" Shi'a, whose government rests on a officer caste drawn almost entirely from the North of the country – the South's officers and bureaucrats having been largely pensioned off after Yemen's reunification in 1990.

This has fuelled a parallel Shi'a Islamist movement in the North, – the so-called "Houthis" – descendants of people who Saudi Arabia once armed and backed in a war against a republican government supported by Nasser Egypt's in the 1960s, but who, in today's world, are Saudi Arabia's enemies in its "cold war" with Iran.

Saudi Arabia has good reason to fear Shi'a secessionism, in Yemen and elsewhere in the Arab world. The insurgency has gained particular strength in Sa'dah governorate, which adjoins Saudi Arabia's own partly-Shi'a Najran province. And while Najran is not so important in itself, there is always the risk that a successful secessionist movement in one region might encourage rebellion by the much larger concentration of Shi'as in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province – which just happens to contain most of the country's oil production.

With secessionist movements in both the North and South of the

country, and Wahhabi radicals, in their ingratitude, engaging in violent plots against the United States, the global godfather of the Saleh government's regional Saudi pimp, it is no wonder that US analysts are describing Yemen as a "failed state". But hence also the polite fiction – from all the parties concerned – that Al-Qaeda is the principal object of the Yemeni government's repression and US and Saudi intervention. The war-weary American public might be much less enthusiastic about military action to keep the obscenely wealthy House of Saud firmly in control of the region and its oil resources.

Indeed, the focus on Al-Qaeda in the Western media sits uneasily with the hysterical Saudi accusations of Iran's encouragement of the Houthi rebels – which, while doubtlessly exaggerated to prod US President Obama into action, make sense given that Iran already supports popular Shi'a movements against those supported by the Saudis elsewhere. These include Iraq, where the pro-Iranian National Iraqi Alliance is the principal component of the pro-US stooge government, and Lebanon, where Hizbullah is the main party in opposition to the pro-US and pro-Saudi government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

Socialists, of course, should recognise that there is nothing inherently "progressive" in the Iran regime's drive to gain regional influence at Saudi Arabia's expense – it too is a theocracy that oppresses its minorities, and bloodily represses the struggles of its working class for democratic rights. But that does not at all mean that we are indifferent to what is happening in Yemen, especially when civilians are being killed and when the United States becomes directly involved. The anti-war movement should denounce the bloody and covert Saudi war in the North, and resolutely oppose the intervention of Britain and the US under the cover of a "war on terror".

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

# Scandals, corruption and sectarianism

Fears have been raised that the Robinson scandal would impact on devolution of policing and justice to Stormont. Bernie McAdam argues that devolution is no solution

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has expelled MP Iris Robinson after a love affair and financial corruption scandal. Despite reassurances that Christ had forgiven her, Robinson failed to impress her fellow evangelicals in the DUP. But now the scandal has gone beyond a personal or family crisis, and has implications for devolution and the Good Friday Agreement.

Last month, the BBC's Spotlight programme exposed how Robinson had abused her position for loans to give to her teenage lover Kirk McCambley. Her husband, First Minister Peter Robinson, is also in trouble after failing to notify the authorities when he found out. He has had to step down while an investigation is launched into his cover-up of events.

At the same time, concern is mounting over a possible collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly as the two parties in government, Sinn Fein and the DUP, fight over the devolution of policing and justice powers from Westminster to Stormont. This is meant to be the last piece in the jigsaw puzzle of the Good Friday Agreement.

**A political scandal**

Robinson is a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Castlereagh Borough Council. Last year she attacked gays as an "abomination" and said that homosexuality was "viler" than child sex abuse. But the affair exposed her religious hypocrisy, and the bigotry of some Unionist politicians for all to see. In a state well used to pogroms against Catholics and Roma, gay people would be particularly vulnerable.

Robinson's position was also used to benefit McCambley and herself financially. Two loans of £25,000 were secured from wealthy property developers

£5,000 of which she took for herself. The loans were to set McCambley up as a cafe owner. When the question of the lease came to be decided at a council meeting, he was given the go-ahead. Robinson was present but did not declare her interest on the loans.

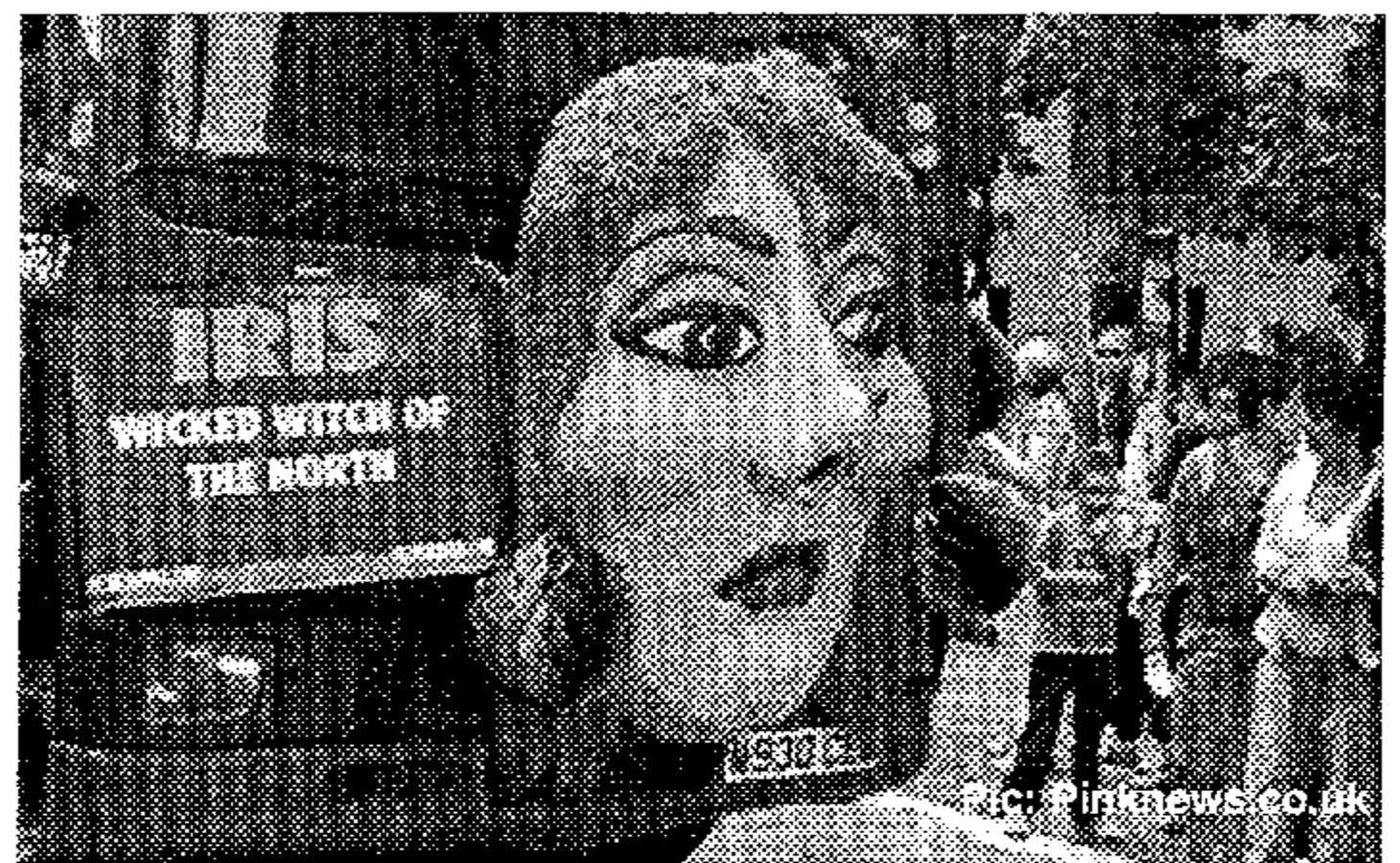
This scandal reveals much about the way that the rich and their politicians look out for each other. Robinson had lobbied on behalf of property developers Fred Fraser and Ken Campbell on planning applications before, which made the loans easy to get hold of. A sickening reminder of how politics functions in capitalism.

**A sectarian state**

In the state of 'northern Ireland' this kind of greed and corruption has a sectarian character. Regarded as a 'Protestant state for a Protestant people', where Catholics are second class citizens and subject to discrimination over jobs, housing and education, oppression of Catholics was used to keep the Protestant working class onside. This was a classic British imperial divide and rule policy.

In 1968 this discrimination was the trigger for mass anti-Unionist revolt. Thirty subsequent years of struggle ended British imperial might when Sinn Fein signed up to a peace deal. The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) started a process in which Sinn Fein/IRA would disarm, accept the Unionist veto over a united Ireland, and finally accept the hated police force. In typical Sinn Fein spin this would bring a united Ireland all the nearer.

But the Good Friday Agreement has not brought a united Ireland nearer and has not changed the spots on Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Since Sinn Fein appointed representatives to the Policing Board in 2007, republicans have pointed to the increases in harassment by the PSNI. This has



Activists protest against Iris Robinson's anti-gay comments

been borne out by a trebling of stop and search operations last year to nearly 10,000. Republican opponents of the Good Friday Agreement continue to experience arrest and detention without trial.

**Peace settlement a sham**

It's been 10 years since the agreement, and Sinn Fein is still waiting for the transfer of policing powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Their DUP partners have stalled the process to get more concessions out of Sinn Fein and the British government. They also fear the growing influence of the hard-line Traditional Unionist Voice who are against any partnership in government with who they term "unrepentant terrorists".

The devastating impact of the Robinson scandal and the possibility of Sinn Fein becoming the largest party in the next Assembly election has alarmed the DUP. Not surprising then that the UUP and the DUP met up with the Tories. A united Unionist bloc or an electoral agreement would ensure that Sinn Fein does not gain the highest vote. The potential for a collapse of the power-sharing executive remains very real.

Whatever the outcome, direct rule or not, Sinn Fein is left clinging

ing to a flawed peace process that has not delivered an equal and just settlement. The GFA does not challenge the sectarian and privileged nature of the Orange state.

Devolution of policing is not making the police force – or the state – more democratic. Only the dismantling of the Orange state can do that.

The need for a political alternative to the sectarian and sham-bolic peace settlement is urgently required. Sinn Fein's power sharing with the deeply reactionary DUP has not only seen the historic sell out of the fight for a united Ireland but complicity in cuts and attacks on all workers in the North. Sinn Fein also faces a number of charges of covering up sex abuse allegations against fellow republicans. The time for a revolutionary alternative is now!

A new revolutionary workers party committed to the abolition of capitalism and imperialism throughout Ireland needs to be built. The fight against the sectarian state and its police force in the north needs to be linked to the struggle around jobs, pay, housing and social services and control in the workplace, opening the way to working class power in a united Ireland. *Bernie McAdam*



**ITALY**

# Vicious pogrom against migrants

In the first week of January, the media has reported "riots" involving African immigrant workers and Italian residents of Rosarno, a town of around 16,000 in southern Italy. Dave Stockton look at what happened and why



Migrant workers protest against racist attacks

Some 8,000 of Italy's immigrant workers - the majority from Africa - live in the region of Reggio Calabria, the toe of Italy, most employed in picking fruit and vegetables. Many are clandestini (illegals) and brutally exploited by gang masters, with links to the local mafia, the 'Ndrangheta.

They work 12-hour days for a maximum of 20 - 23 euros. Forced to live in groups in abandoned buildings, factories and warehouses the conditions in Rosarno were described by a local priest as "out of Dante's Inferno". About 1,000 African workers were living in a disused food warehouse in the town with only eight chemical toilets and three showers, with no electricity. African labourers are now central to southern Italy's agriculture, working in subhuman conditions without rights.

The rebellion of the clandestini

in Rosarno came after a gang of white youths - whom a local trade unionist described as "brats of the 'Ndrangheta families" - used air rifles to shoot at a group of African immigrants returning from their work - two of them were wounded.

"Those guys were firing at us as if it was a fairground game," said a Moroccan worker to La Repubblica newspaper. "They were laughing, I was screaming, other cars were passing by but nobody stopped."

A rumour that one of those shot had died - false as it turned out - sparked the rebellion. Around 1,600 migrant workers carrying placards saying "We are not animals" and "Rosarno people are racist", marched into the town centre smashing cars and setting fire to rubbish.

Armed with clubs, stones and hunting rifles, the 'Ndrangheta and local fascists responded by attacking the migrant workers. Fighting last-

ed a whole day. Eventually heavily armed carabinieri units encircled the workers in front of the old factory. A number of workers managed to escape but the remainder were deported from the city overnight. 1,128 immigrants "voluntarily" left, it was announced, or were "escorted out." Many were injured or hospitalised. Hundreds will be deported from Italy despite police promises to the contrary.

The fire brigade destroyed the places where the immigrants had lived and their possessions with high pressure hoses and bulldozers.

In the days after, a veritable man-hunt took place in the citrus groves of the nearby plain of Gioia Tauro for a few remaining African workers. One Italian left politician said that after Rosarno's ethnic cleansing it would have the dreadful distinction of being world's "only totally white town".

The immigrant workers' fight-back was totally justified and it is a scandal that the leader of the largest and more militant Italian union federation Cgil, Guglielmo Epifani, condemned "violence, irrespective of where it comes from". The destruction of the last farm workers' unions by the 'Ndrangheta 20 years ago has allowed this huge invisible layer of migrant workers to develop without rights or organisation.

It is clear from these shocking events that the European labour movement has a lot of catching up to do if it is not to see itself poisoned and weakened by racism. The only way to avoid this is to take up a vigorous struggle for the full legalisation of migrant workers and immigrant communities and combine it with a militant, class-wide struggle to make the bosses' pay for their economic crisis.

## Support migrant workers' strike across whole of Europe on March 1st

According to the European Parliament, there are between 4.5 and 8 million "illegal" immigrant workers in the in the EU, employed in construction, farming, hotels, manufacturing, health and caring services, etc. In most countries they lack nearly all rights connected with citizenship, protective labour legislations and in many countries, access to healthcare and education. In Italy, it is a criminal offence liable to a fine of up to 10,000 euros.

In the US on 1 May 2006, immigrant groups, community churches, trade unions organised a "Day without immigrants" - calling for a

mass boycott of buying, selling, working, and attending school, in order to demonstrate the degree to which the country depends on the labour of up to 12 million undocumented migrants. The demonstration called for legalisation and civil rights. Over a million participated nationwide, leaving work and demonstrating in 50 cities under the slogan "Si, se puede" (Yes, it can be done).

Now the idea of a similar day has come to Europe, linked to the date when the Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Asylum Law (CESEDA) came into force - 1 March 2005. A variety of immigrant organisations have called for a day

of strikes and non-economic activity to demonstrate the existence and importance of immigrants to countries of the EU and to fight for their rights. The call that the participating French organisations have issued concludes:

"On 1 March 2010: Take Action by ceasing to eat and/or work. For 24 hours, not to participate in economic activity in the enterprises, associations in the public service, in schools and colleges, in universities, in the hospitals, in shops, in industry, in construction, in agriculture, services, media, in politics... For the first time in France, we decide to do not participate in the life of the state in this sense. We need

to mark our presence."

This call has been taken up by organisations in Italy and Greece. The workers movement and antiracist organisations should respond to in Britain to make this a truly Europe-wide event. Racist attacks and pogroms against immigrants have been growing during the onset of the crisis. It is time to bring together the workers' movement, the immigrant communities, youth, antiracists into a powerful phalanx that says no to all attempts to divide us and demands full political, trade union rights and equal wages and access to social services for immigrants.

**ENVIRONMENT**

# Why did COP15 fail?

The summit saw a conflict between the major global powers on who should pay the costs of the climate crisis. It failed when no one could agree who this should be, argues *Dave Stockton*

After two years of preparation and two weeks of face-to-face negotiation, the conference that was supposed to establish legally binding limits on emissions and to agree sources of funding to help protect poorer countries has failed - utterly. The 15th United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP15) drew world leaders, environment ministers, NGOs, and journalists to Copenhagen - in all some 50,000. By any standard, this was a conference of historic significance. All the more significant, then, that it failed.

The only legally binding climate agreement in existence, the Kyoto Protocols, will expire in 2012 and nothing similar has been agreed to replace it. The Copenhagen Accord has taken no measures to limit or reverse the processes with which unbridled capitalist despoliation of the natural environment threatens the world.

This means that the movement against climate change needs to radically reorient its tactics and strategy away from NGO-style lobbying of governments. It needs to consider how the working masses can topple the politicians, the capitalist classes they represent, and the entire economic system which will make this catastrophe inevitable.

Copenhagen showed that a conference on the climate is actually a conference on who controls what. The stalemate over the proposed agreement reflected the balance of forces in the world, and also how they are shifting. In particular, it revealed three political facts of great significance.

The first of these is the yawning chasm between the interests of the imperialist developed states, plus the new would-be imperialist superpower China, and the economically and politically weak countries of Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America.

The second category - representing the majority of the world's people - saw their fears for their future brutally thrust aside. The imperialists were hell-bent on defending their right to monopolise

the globe's resources in order to swell the profits of a few thousand mega-corporations.

The pledge by the rich nations of \$30bn over the next three years, rising to \$100bn per year by 2020 is, as an African delegate commented, "hardly enough to pay for the coffins of those who will perish". It is chickenfeed compared with the trillions of dollars spent by the US and the EU on bailing out the banks in 2008.

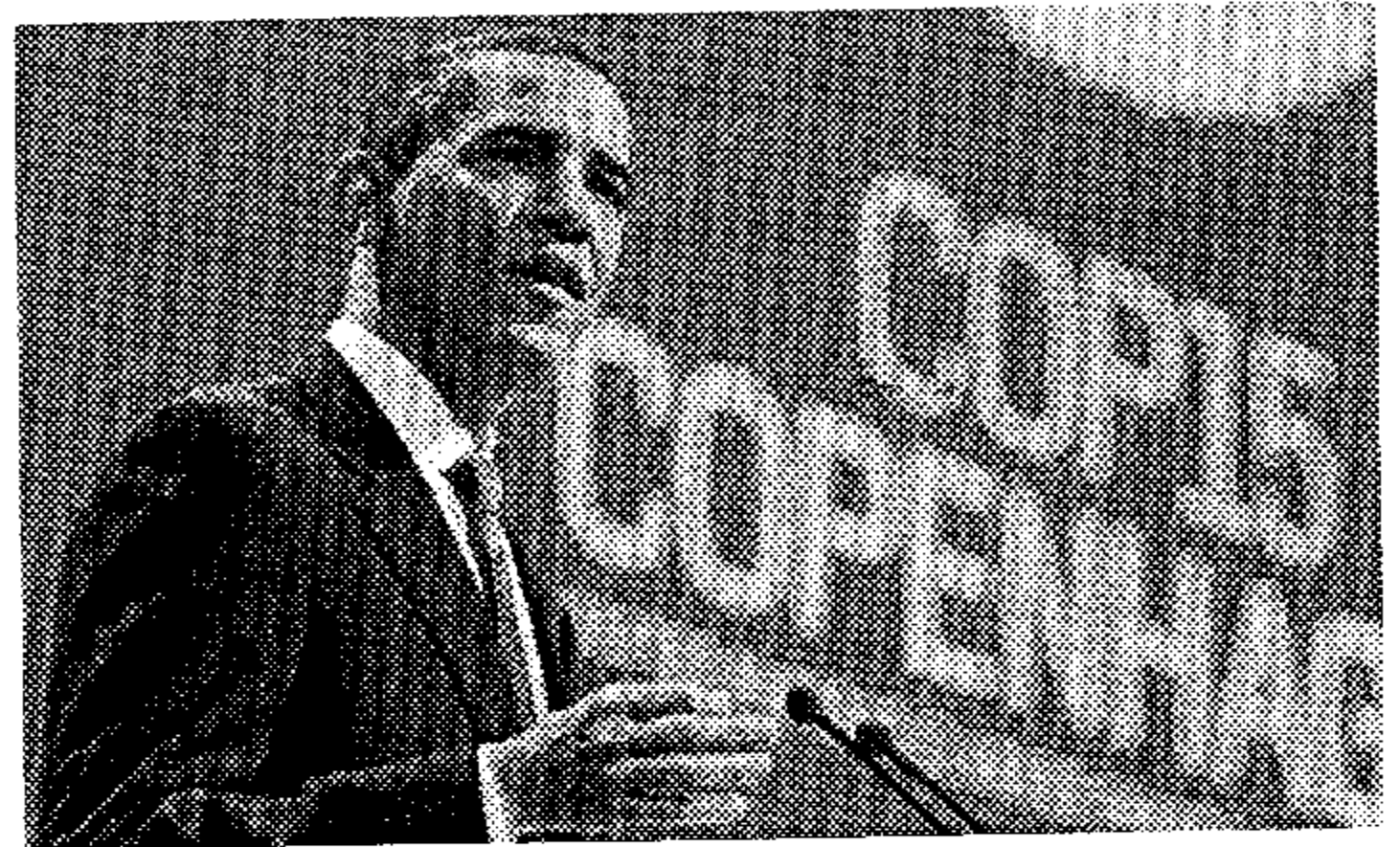
Worse, the handful of great powers refused point blank to commit "new money". In other words, any payments that are made will simply be taken out of existing aid budgets. The countries in the front line of climate change will be forced to choose between fighting its effects and slashing spending on education, social welfare and economic development for their peoples.

**Secret negotiations**

The second significant fact on display in Copenhagen was what happened in the behind-the-scenes negotiations to which only a handful of "big powers" were invited. These meetings witnessed a sharp clash between the old, "satisfied" imperialist powers and those leaner and hungrier states seeking to join the imperialist club. China, in particular, showed it cannot be ignored.

China ruthlessly used its newly acquired economic muscle to veto any proposals that would have limited its own capitalist development in the 21st Century. Already the British are trying to throw the entire blame for the Copenhagen fiasco onto China.

Yet China can reply, with complete justice, that criticism from the UK and other developed countries is the purest hypocrisy, since they are responsible for two centuries of pollution and are today responsible for 60 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. CO2 emissions per head are four times higher in US and Australia and twice as high in EU and Japan as they are in China. Moreover, the US itself proposes to do nothing to reduce its emissions beyond the fraud of



Obama's marvellous rhetoric could not cover up the fact that the deal was a failure

carbon trading, by which its continued emissions are supposedly offset by bribing underdeveloped countries to stay underdeveloped.

Nevertheless we must not be silent on China's actions. China blocked even the inadequate targets because it opposes any restraint on its soaring carbon emissions, which will contribute massively to the problem. And if other "developing nations" follow suit - as they have every right to do - we will reach disaster even sooner than presently predicted.

**Useless UN**

Last, but not least, the deal cruelly exposed the supposed role of the UN and its huge NGO jamboree, which it pretended was a consultation with "civil society". In fact, the Copenhagen Accord was not even voted on by the representatives of the 193 nations present.

Richard Black of the BBC described the dismay as the deal broke: "...scientists and campaigners ... watched aghast as Chinese and US leaders and their entourages flew in, took over the agenda and emerged with what was basically their own private deal, with leaders announcing it live on television before others realised it had happened."

Whatever spin is put on the Copenhagen Accord, it will not meet the threat of climate change. So how can we save humanity from climate disaster? Quite simply by

recognising that we have to mobilise its potential victims in a global fight back. The workers and poor peasants of the world, the popular classes of both the imperialist and the exploited semi-colonial countries, have to take up this fight. They have to mobilise to force their governments to take real measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, to stop cutting down forests and burning fossil fuels in power stations and vehicles, and to develop "clean" sources of energy. The spearhead of this alliance has to be the politically and trade union organised working class in all countries.

Obviously, too, we will never win the majority of them to action unless we present an alternative form of "development", a means of overcoming the inequality and misery of the great majority that is maintained in the interests of a tiny minority. This simply cannot be done under capitalism, with its national states viciously competing to divide and redivide the world's markets and resources, as well as its corporations struggling for profits. Copenhagen shows that the movement to save humanity and its natural environment must become fully and consciously anticapitalist, revolutionary socialist, and internationalist in its goals.

Only a globally planned economy directed at social justice and a sustainable environment can meet our needs. Nothing short of this will do.

## REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN HISTORY

## YEVGENIA

## BOSCH

***“We must stop at nothing and strangle the power of capitalism”***



Workers Power begins a new series on revolutionary women to highlight their often forgotten role in the communist movement. In our first article, **Katja Teran** looks at the life of Yevgenia Bosch

**Y**evgenia Bogdanovna Bosch was born on 11 August 1879 (23 August after the calendar was modernised) in Ochakiv in the Ukraine.

Victor Serge, the communist writer, who was once a supporter of Trotsky's Left Opposition, called Bosch one of the “most capable military leaders to come to the fore in the early stages of the Russian civil war.”

Although there is unfortunately very little surviving information about her, Serge's comment shows that Bosch was no insignificant figure in the struggle for soviet power in the Ukraine.

She engaged in political activity from a very early age and quickly began to make a name for herself in the communist movement. She joined the revolutionary social-democrats in 1901 at the age of 22 and took part in political activity, mainly in Kiev. Work at that time was mainly underground. She joined the Bolshevik (revolutionary majority) faction in 1903.

She broke with her husband in 1907 and became one of the leaders of the regional organisation in 1909. In 1912 she was arrested and imprisoned, catching tuberculosis, which severely aggravated her congenital heart and lung condition. Nevertheless she escaped from prison in 1914 and at Lenin's invitation attended the conference of Russian revolutionaries in Berne in 1915. She opposed Lenin's support for the

right of nations to self-determination and campaigned against his policy.

By the February 1917 revolution, her standing in the movement was such that she was elected as a member of the Kiev Committee of the revolutionary Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, and was a member of the Kiev Soviet. From April onwards she served not only as a chair of the District Committee of the RSDWP in the southwestern region, but was also a delegate to the 6th party conference in 1917 and the 7th All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

Initially Yevgenia opposed the idea that the Bolsheviks should lead the revolution forward to socialist tasks, and her newspaper Social Democratic Voice argued that “We believe that the development of productive forces and social power of the proletariat have not reached the level at which the working class could carry out the socialist revolution”. However, in April she was persuaded of Lenin's view that the working class should go forward to take the power and break the hold of capitalism.

By September preparations began in earnest for the armed uprising against the capitalist Provisional Government and for the establishment of soviet power in Kiev, Vinnytsia and other cities – and Yevgenia Bosch was at the centre of the action. It was above all for her outstanding military skills that she was elected at the first All-Ukrainian Congress of Soviets to be

part of its central executive.

After the defeat of Petlyura's counter-revolution, the first soviet government took power in Ukraine, she took on the post of People's Secretary for Home Affairs – taking direct charge of the struggle to resist the bosses and landlords' counter-revolution.

At the January 1918 congress of Ukrainian peasants in Kharkiv she declared:

“The fight must end with the transfer of power into the hands of the working class, which we see in Russia, where power has passed into the hands of workers in their organisations - the Soviets of Workers and Peasants' deputies. ... We must go on, must stop at nothing and eventually strangle the power of capitalism.”

On the great issue of the Brest-Litovsk Peace of 1918, Bosch initially opposed the peace and supported the position of the ‘left-communists’; she later worked on behalf of the Communist Party's central committee as a military and state official.

In 1923 she backed the Left opposition of Leon Trotsky against the emerging bureaucratic faction of Stalin, and signed the first official statement of the opposition, the Platform of the 46. Increasingly opposed to the party's course, suffering from ill-health and great pain from heart disease, cardiac asthma and pulmonary tuberculosis she took her own life on 25 January 1925.

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# The struggle for our education

By Rachel Brooks

The next few years are set to be bleak for education in Britain if Labour and the Tories get their way. Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families has promised £2.5bn worth of cuts in the sector.

The city academies scheme, which hands ownership of our schools to wealthy individuals and profit-making corporations, has been extended. But now the city academy partners don't have to stump up any money and can take control of facilities, and to a certain degree, the curriculum, for free.

Universities are set to be hit hard by funding cuts. Kings College London faces 10% cuts across all departments as well as the closing down of Engineering. Arts and Humanities also face drastic closures, with Camberwell School of Art and Design losing the ceramics department. The University of Sussex is launching an attack on language degrees – so much so that they may be gone forever. Birmingham University is set to lose its sociology department, currently there is a 90-day consultation period of the review that suggested closure.

These reviews are being undertaken across the country to determine whether it is "financially viable" to maintain certain departments. They are of course being carried out behind closed doors, with only senior management and trustees present, without any student consultation.

University Councils, the supposed sovereign body of institutions, operate secretly. At the University of East Anglia, the cuts were announced at the council but the student union officials were told not to reveal them to the student body for reasons of "confidentiality". Activities such as this show a lack of accountability and the introduction of business secrecy into learning.

On top of all this, the Browne review into tuition fees began in November; the results of course will be announced after the general election. Fees for Russell Group universities could be as steep as £30,000 a year as the cap on fees, which is currently at £3250 a year, is lifted. This would introduce a market-place into universities, much like Amer-

ica, where the "better" institutions cost more and the value of a degree is based on its expense, rather than the learning experience.

The current attacks stem from the government's deficit as a result of the bank bail out. The government debt now stands at over £120 billion, and they want to make ordinary people pay the price – through our healthcare, pensions and education. The current university and college cuts are pre-emptive for the immense shortfall they expect to take after the general election. This means there could be worse to come.

The rich and the bankers could be taxed and the budget shortfall could be solved very easily, but there are ideological as well as economic reasons why this is not being done

## We need committees of action with delegates from every school, college and university

– because of the role of education in the capitalist system. Russian revolutionaries Bukharin and Preobrazhensky explained, in *The ABC of Communism*, that capitalism uses education in three ways: "First, it inspires the coming generation of workers with devotion and respect for the capitalist regime. Secondly, it creates from the young of the ruling classes 'cultured' controllers of the working population. Thirdly, it assists capitalist production in the application of sciences to technique, thus increasing capitalist profits."

In capitalism, education is used to maintain class society, ensuring that the education that workers receive is adequate for them to perform their work, but not enough that they will question the capitalist economic system. It makes sure that the ruling class receive greater education to control these workers. Knowledge, for Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, is indeed power.

In Britain, the proposed money-saving two-year diploma by Peter Mandelson is a good

example of this. The University of Hertfordshire, which has a mostly working-class student body, was listed as one of the first possible universities to try it. Students would receive a "qualification" which would come after training for a particular job, rather than expand knowledge in a variety of subject areas.

### Resistance and revolution

Communists view education differently. Education should be to better humanity, so that every single human being has access to free and quality education. It should be a right, not a privilege. In capitalism we graduate from university at around the age of 21, perhaps undertake a postgraduate degree, and then spend the remainder of our days working. In a classless communist society in which the economy is planned, education would continue for life, because it would not be used as a tool to merely train the workforce, but to develop human culture and enjoyment of life.

So, what do we do now? The cuts and attacks on education must be resisted with strikes and occupations uniting teachers, lecturers and students in action. Committees of action should be elected with delegates from every school, college and university that faces spending cuts, job losses and closures. These could organise occupations, strikes, walkouts and teach-ins, and could keep control of the action out of the hands of unaccountable union leaders.

When management tell us that cuts are necessary, workers and students should demand that they open their financial books and tell the truth. The democratic committees could draw up inventory of exactly what's needed to provide a first class education for everybody and then fight to take it from the rich. Ultimately the fight for education for all is therefore a fight to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist planned economy.

This type of working class democracy we need to co-ordinate the struggle today, can become the model of how education could be run under socialism, controlling our own curriculum and extending education so that it serves not the market and private profit but the unconstrained development of human potential.