

workers power

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

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100 days of resistance

The Tories are planning to use their first 100 days to force through cuts and attack Trade Unions and democratic rights. The task of the labour movement is nationwide resistance in the workplaces and on the streets



KD TAIT

We are now ruled by a government elected by just 24 per cent of the electorate.

The Queen's speech set out a litany of attacks that threaten to be deeper, sharper and more painful than the austerity imposed under the coalition:

- £12 billion cuts to welfare
- new anti-union laws crippling the right to strike
- further fragmentation and privatisation of the NHS
- the extension of Right to Buy to Housing Association properties
- refuse welfare support for migrants
- destroy refugee boats instead of rescuing people in the Mediterranean
- pay freeze and job cuts for public sector workers

The severity of the Tory plans has provoked a mood of militant determination to resist which has partly overcome the defeatism prevalent in the last two years.

Just as in 2010, when the imposition of £9,000 tuition fees sparked a revolt which saw mass demonstrations, walkouts and occupations that spread far beyond university students, young people were the first to react to the Tory victory - with militant protest.

Demonstrations and meetings to

END AUSTERITY NOW
NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
SATURDAY 20 JUNE 2015

organise resistance to the new government have reflected the mood to fight - surpassing anything seen since the high point of struggle in 2011-12.

A new movement

Everything is building towards the demonstration of June 20 called by the People's Assembly. This will be the first real test of the wider labour and socialist movement's capacity to mobilise a show of strength in the capital. Young people will doubtless turn out in huge num-

bers but this time the unions must be in the forefront too. But after the march we need to build a movement that surpasses in size and effectiveness that of the fragmented anticuts campaigns of the last five years.

We need a movement that can confront every law before parliament, every government directive, with mass protest, strikes and direct action to block their implementation - or force their repeal.

Whatever structures are mobilising for June 20 - local People's Assemblies, Trade Union Councils,

individual campaigns across the country - need to step up their activities and coordination after the demonstration.

They should draw up a list of unions, campaigns, individual activists and use it to call a meeting or assembly to which delegates from every workplace, every trade union branch, every ward and constituency Labour Party, every tenants' or students' initiative, every anti-racist and women's group, should be invited.

The local anti-cuts committees and competing campaigns need to found a genuinely democratic federation that thrash out a strategy for struggle and effectively coordinate nationwide action.

In this way local people's assemblies or action committees can grow from this mobilisation and become real coordinating bodies able to mobilise solidarity with every sector under attack, generalising their struggles into a nationwide political resistance to austerity.

A huge mobilisation for 20 June can start to lay the basis for direct action all over Britain, in the workplaces and on the streets, to stop the Tories in their tracks and kick them out long before their term is due.

All out for 20 June! ●

What we fight for



Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation whose politics are founded on the following principles

CAPITALISM is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militias can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the rule of the working class in society. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

THE LABOUR PARTY is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party – pro-capitalist in its politics and practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the creation of a genuine workers' party, based on a programme for the overthrow of capitalism and the implementation of socialism and workers' power.

THE TRADE UNIONS must be transformed by a rank and file movement to put control of the unions into the hands of the members. All officials must be regularly elected and subject to instant recall; they must earn the average wage of the members they represent. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class – factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action and workers' defence organisations.

OCTOBER 1917 The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste led these states to crisis and destruction. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stal-

inist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the capitalists (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class worldwide. These parties are reformist and offer no perspective for workers' revolution.

SOCIAL OPPRESSION is an integral feature of capitalism, which systematically oppresses people on the basis of race, age, gender and sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all-class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

IMPERIALISM is a world system, which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of the oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. Against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists we fight for permanent revolution – working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist and semi-colonial countries, we are for the victory of those oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and all other countries. We fight imperialist war, not with pacifist pleas, but with militant class struggle methods, including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL We stand in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and the revolutionary policies of the first four congresses of the Third International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International. The L5I is pledged to refound a revolutionary communist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism, if you are an internationalist – join us!

US cops keep killing, keep lying

Ferguson, Baltimore, and now Madison drive mass resistance on the streets



SAM COPLEY

Following the massive uprising of youth in Baltimore, US, which forced local officials to charge police with the killing of Freddie Gray, a new upsurge of protest is now shaking Dane County, Wisconsin.

On 12 May, District Attorney Ismael Ozanne declared no charges will be filed against killer cop Matt Kenny. On 6 March Kenny shot Tony "Terrell" Robinson Jr, a 19 years old unarmed mixed race man, despite warnings by dispatchers not to escalate the situation. Like the identical verdict that absolved the killers of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri last August, killers, Ozanne said in his statement that this was a "lawful use of deadly police force" with the absurd excuse that Robinson had taken marijuana and magic mushrooms, showing once again how the so-called war on drugs is used to justify violence against black and mixed race youth.

In Dane County, Wisconsin, black people are around eight per cent of the population, but 48 per cent of the prison population and almost 80 per cent of all juvenile inmates.

Taken in isolation this is a story of a police officer who, despite warnings by dispatchers not to escalate the situation, took less than half a minute to shoot and kill a young, unarmed mixed race man.

Taken in the context of US policing, Terrell's was the 192nd death from police violence in 2015 and nothing but a continuation of the unwritten policy toward non-whites. Following the fatal shooting there were mass walkouts from schools and colleges in Madison.

Nearly 2,000 protesters occupied Wisconsin State Capitol, including Terrell's friends and family, his local community and a group called the Young Gifted and Black (YGB) coalition, part of the umbrella protest group Black Lives Matter. The protest saw 25 arrests, as the protesters refused to leave the area, demanding

instead a United Nations inquest into the killing.

Over the intervening months there have been numerous Black Lives Matter protests highlighting the systematic discrimination and murder of black people by the US state and the police in the wake of the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on 9 August last year.

Across the US, a new civil rights movement is being born, demanding an end to systematic state harassment, to the imprisonment and murder of black people, and calling for the police to be made accountable to the community, for officers to face justice for their crimes.

The ruling class in the US recognises the anger, and is trying hard to convince black people that there is no need for a renewed civil rights movement. Back in March, on the 50th anniversary of the great civil rights marches from Selma to Alabama in 1965, President Obama made a direct reference to the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, when he said: "What happened in Ferguson may not be unique, but it's no longer endemic, or sanctioned by law and custom; and before the Civil Rights Movement, it most surely was."

Yet what happened in Ferguson also happened in Sanford, in Cleveland, in Brooklyn, in Oakland, in Baltimore and in Madison... the list goes on. The justice system covered up for and legitimised the killings – and only in one case is action being taken against the police.

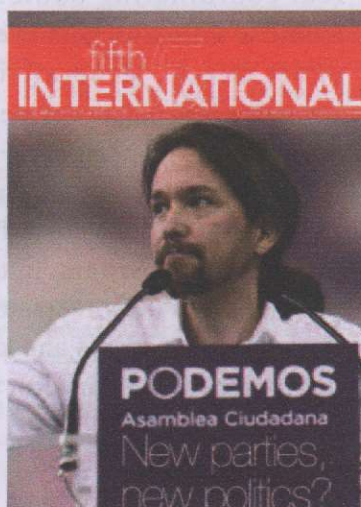
That is in Baltimore, where the protests reached such a pitch that the local political establishment backed down last month. There protests against the killing of Freddie Gray led to an uprising of black and working class youth lasting several days, pressuring Baltimore's Attorney to charge six officers.

The murder of black Americans by the US state has been ongoing since the Civil War. Even the end of slavery and - a century later - the great Civil Rights Movement and Black Power movement that ended the Jim Crow apartheid system, failed to end the intrinsic racism on which US capitalism rests.

All workers in the US white, Latino, and Asian, need to join with their brothers and sisters in the black communities, to mobilisation in their defence on the principle that there can not be freedom for one until there is freedom for all.

For this reason it will take nothing less than the overthrow of the entire US state, and the system of exploitation and inequality it exists to defend, in order to end a situation where young black and mixed race people are murdered on a daily basis. ●

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SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR

We need to talk about Labour

Reports of the death of social democracy have been greatly exaggerated



KD TAIT

The biggest, most far reaching question posed by the Tories' election victory is what will now happen to the Labour Party. Even before all the results were in, the pundits, and its own right wing leaders, were blaming Labour's defeat on its continued links to the trades unions.

Yet, almost immediately, Len McCluskey, of Unite the union, insisted that Labour should "demonstrate that they are the voice of ordinary working people, that they are the voice of organised labour". In other words, that Labour's defeat was a result of the weakness of those links.

These conflicting arguments express the very real contradiction at the heart of the Labour Party; although its politics and its policies are clearly pro-capitalist, its social roots remain within the working class. From the point of view of the bosses, the bankers, the financiers, in a word, the capitalists, this makes it a potentially unreliable party of government, one that cannot be guaranteed to force through policies that would be bound to hurt its own supporters.

For the very same reason, those supporters see in the Labour Party a political representative that should at least defend their interests. That this remains the case is shown by the 650,000 more votes it won in comparison to 2010. But, despite that, Labour lost, and lost badly and that is why its future is in the balance.

For the right wing of the Labour Party itself, and the capitalists who want to see a more reliable "alternative party of government", the answer is to resolve the contradiction by removing the party's traditional links to the working class movement, principally the unions. This would create something like the US Democrat Party and would leave the working class with no representation of its own at all.

That would mark a historic defeat for the working class movement in the UK and should be opposed by all socialists, whether in the Labour Party or outside it.

Labour's record

We've been here before. In 2010, the trades unions cast their block vote to install Ed Miliband as Labour leader. The media denounced 'Red Ed' and claimed 'union barons' would now hold Labour to ransom.

As we pointed out at the time, and five years of bitter experience have confirmed, McCluskey had no intention of holding anyone to ransom.

Miliband, having gratefully pocketed the votes of Labour's union membership, acted with unseemly haste to prove his loyalty, not to the class that funded his entire career, but to its class enemy.

He blocked Labour from playing any useful role in the opposition to cuts and pension reforms, even where Labour was formally opposed to them. He denounced strikes, backed cuts to services to make workers bear the cost of bailing out the banks, and promised a Labour government would stick to Tory austerity targets for at least two years.

Under pressure from a Tory campaign

against union funding for Labour, he forced through the Collins Review, which scrapped the Electoral College in favour of one member, one vote and removed the trade unions' collective influence within the party.

In opposition, Labour even refused to counter the Tory lie that its overspending while in office caused the crisis. This reluctance to defend its positive record of reforms; increased NHS spending, pre-school childcare provision, school building and investment, allowed the Tories to start dismantling them.

Labour's cowardice gave weight to the Tory claim that spending on the welfare budget wrecked the economy. In fact, the ballooning welfare budget was almost entirely due to Labour's decision to subsidise poverty wages instead of making the Tories' small and big business backers shell out.

Like the SNP, Labour accepted the bosses' logic of deficit reduction but, unlike the SNP, it could not present an anti-austerity programme because it was standing for government office.

Labourism

For Labour's parliamentary leadership, and for the union leaders, electoral victory means convincing the capitalist class that Labour, despite its roots in the working class, can be a safe pair of hands to hold government office.

To do that, the reformist leaders adapt to the "political centre", the "aspirational" middle classes. This was expressed in Miliband's luckless campaign to woo the "squeezed middle" and has now evolved into the "100 per cent" that Tristram Hunt, a bland middle class contender for the Labour leadership, thinks should be the focus, rather than "micro-groups" like the hundreds of thousands on zero hours contracts.

In fact, the "middle class" is not the whole nation, nor even a majority. It is a vocal minority, whose bedrock ideology of compromise between the classes stems from its members' social position as a privileged layer bent on preserving and enhancing its privileges. It does so against the working class from below and the ruling class from above. The fact that the working class lacks an organisation focusing and sharpening its class instincts into political consciousness encour-

ages the middle class to aggrandise themselves at the expense of workers in their council houses rather than the rich in their mansions.

As a leader of workers in the firing line, McCluskey naturally denounced the Tories and criticised Labour's silence. Yet, when push came to shove, at Grangemouth, he capitulated to the billionaire Ineos boss, Jim Ratcliffe. This humiliation without a fight was a serious defeat for Scottish workers and their militant traditions. Although it was not the first time that a 'left' union leader demobilised or ducked a fight their members could have won, it came at a time that was most damaging to morale and class confidence in the wider movement.

It was no coincidence that this was on the heels of the Falkirk "scandal" involving Grangemouth convenor, Unite Scotland chair and Falkirk West CLP chair, Stevie Deans. When, after years of patiently waiting for Labour to do something, Unite tried to install a candidate in the Falkirk by-election selection process, Miliband backed the right wing witch hunt and actually called for a police investigation into the dispute.

Following a Labour internal review, which revealed not only that Unite had done nothing wrong, but that it was the rightwing candidate who had paid the membership fees of his supporters, the party suppressed the report. Jim Ratcliffe took advantage of the ensuing chaos to sack Stevie Deans, provoking the Grangemouth dispute.

This is just one more example that expresses not only the existence of what Marxists call the "organic link", that is, the thousand threads from the rank and file to the top officials that bind the labour movement to "its" party, but also the preparedness of both its Left and Right wings to subordinate the political independence of the working class to its pro-capitalist political programme.

What is to be done?

Labour remains a mass party rooted in the working class. In the absence of a fighting strategy, the danger is that millions of workers will agree with their union leaders and "wait for Labour" once again. It is the party's roots and historic identification with the working class that make it, along with the trade union

bureaucracy, one of the twin obstacles to an effective fightback against the Tories.

While opposing all attacks from the right wing, our tactics for resistance to the Tories, therefore, have to include tactics for breaking up this obstacle. Labour cannot be "killed by curses", or propaganda exposing its past or present crimes. Nor should the Left try to "bypass" it by joining the Greens or the SNP. That would only fragment the labour movement, drawing activists away and leaving the great majority still under the sway of the current leadership.

The only method is to demand that the Labour Party join a united front of resistance to the Tories. We should demand this not in spite of its leaders' shameful record, but because of it; because millions of workers who live with the consequences of their betrayals nevertheless continue to see these leaders as their leaders. They won't be won to another strategy without witnessing and experiencing a confrontation between rival programmes.

In the unions and the Labour Party, we need to stop the bosses and their media choosing the leadership. In the constituencies, rank and file members, left MPs like John McDonnell, journalists like Owen Jones, need to mobilise members to defend the union link and union members' involvement in choosing the Labour leadership. Miliband's principal legacy of service to the bourgeoisie is his reform of Labour's constitution that weakened the union link and rendered the conference almost totally redundant. This needs to be reversed.

More important than democratic reform though, will be dragging Labour MPs and councillors out of their Westminster and Town Hall bubbles and holding them to account in front of the working class that puts them in office to protect jobs and services, not cut them.

Labour and the trade union bureaucracy remain the leaders of a huge, organised and politically aware section of the working class. Only by mobilising this force, alongside the vanguard of activists who have already seen through Labourism, can we force the Tories from power. Without their involvement, there is little hope of stopping austerity, let alone reversing the cuts and fighting to take control of society's wealth and redistributing it.

That means developing tactics to work alongside Labour supporters and activists and winning them away from Labourism to a new strategy and a new type of organisation. This cannot be done by simple denunciation of Labour as a "bosses' party". The reduction of Labour to a mere rump of its present organisation, as happened to Pasok in Greece and is so eagerly desired by the intelligentsia here, would be a disaster unless some other, better, organisation exists to replace it.

If, in the process, the left outside of Labour, first and foremost those involved in building Left Unity and TUSC, can overcome the self-satisfied sectarianism that has characterised the left's strategies over the last five years, then not only can we repulse the Tory attack and kick them out, but we can build a new mass working class party that can pose the questions of power; Who rules? Which class shall be the master in society? ●

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Tories prepare 10

The hours and days following the election showed the urgent need for the working class

Britain now has a government determined to force through another huge programme of cuts (£18bn to welfare alone) and dig up cornerstones of the post-1945 welfare system: public health, education, housing.

The Tories are likely to be in a hurry, and will take advantage of the 'first 100 days' to go on the offensive, for three reasons:

They calculate that opposition will be disorganised because millions are disoriented and dismayed by the outcome of the election. A Tory majority government was not the outcome they anticipated and flew in the face of the polls and even their own expectations;

The Blairite Labour right will now launch a carefully prepared campaign, backed 100 per cent by the media, to 'take back' the Labour Party, throwing even the tame centre-left onto the defensive and making public opposition to a Tory offensive even more muted;

The new government has a parliamentary majority of just 15 seats. This will erode over time through by-elections and the natural attrition of support as their "reforms" alienate ever larger numbers of people. So they can't rely on governing until 2020 without close votes, defeats and even a late-term Callaghan-style confidence vote. With only around 19 potential allies in the Commons, including 10 Unionists from Northern Ireland, one from UKIP and eight LibDems to prop them up, the Tories know they need to get on with it.

For these reasons, the working class movement needs to quickly assimilate the lessons of the election debacle and reorient to resist the imminent Tory offensive. We should begin by insisting that with a minority of votes cast, the Tories do not have a mandate for their programme of cuts and privatisation and should be resisted through a mass movement and action outside parliament.

This struggle will be industrial, resisting cuts, closures, pay restraint and privatisation by campaigning for joint strike action, backed by direct action through marches and occupations; it will be social and community based too.

It will be political, resisting the rise of the right in the Labour Party and the unions, renewing efforts to get the unions and the left to establish a new mass working class party.

It will be theoretical, because we will have to defeat 'new analyses' that will echo the Blairite offensive and throw responsibility for the defeat back on the working class itself, reviving Eurocommunist narratives about the working class being inherently incapable of beating the British bosses and their party without a strategic alliance with liberalism (in this case they will probably choose the left liberal Greens).

The Tories' outright victory was caused not primarily by Britain's undemocratic electoral system (though just 36.9 per cent of the votes has given them

an overall Commons majority), nor primarily by media bias (though only one two national mainstream newspapers backed Labour while several campaigned aggressively for the Tories), but by the contradictions racking the Tories' opponents.

In Scotland, the independence referendum catalysed widespread opposition to austerity into a nationalist upsurge that converted Labour's prior clear poll lead in Scotland into this unprecedented SNP victory. Labour's historic defeat was its own doing, caused by its failure to oppose austerity, its selection of hated arch-Blairite Jim Murphy as leader and – above all else – by the fact that it campaigned in September 2014 not for the unity of the working class in Britain, not for extending the achievements of the united British labour movement like the NHS, but alongside the Tories and the LibDems for the preservation of UK establishment. Despite the bourgeois SNP's actual record of fiscal conservatism in office, Sturgeon's anti-austerity rhetoric contrasted with Labour's narrative of 'more caring cuts' and 'balancing the budget in a fairer way'. Yet even the SNP's near clean-sweep would not on its own have given Cameron his absolute majority, had it not been for Labour's failure to capitalise on anti-austerity feeling in England.

The LibDems were nearly annihilated and rightly so. The working class and the lower layers of the middle class, unable to send their children to education with-

Labour's few left policies were hugely popular but they were undermined by a refusal to counter the Tory lie that 'overspending' caused the crisis rather than the £1 trillion bailout of the banks

The working class needs to assimilate the lessons of defeat and reorient to resist the imminent Tory offensive with an industrial, social and community based struggle against a government with no mandate

out being saddled with heavy debt, will not easily forget how Clegg abandoned his promises, nor how cheaply his party sold its lightly-held principles for a chance of office. Many of the Lib Dems' votes went to the Tories; some, especially the students and hipster middle classes, went to the Greens; a significant portion went to Labour. But not enough to win the election. The simple reason was that Labour offered no coherent alternative to austerity such as could radicalise the middle class and pull them to the left, as happened in Scotland.

UKIP's 3.9 million votes may have only given them one seat but it represents a significant increase in far right ideas. They made headway mainly among Tory voters on the east coast but also among the less class conscious sections of unorganised and desperate workers in depressed northern towns, southern England and even Wales. Again, workers who fall victim to anti-immigrant demagoguery can only be dislodged, neutralised or won over by a stronger anti-establishment message than UKIP, a more consistent opposition to austerity, not by austerity lite and soft anti-immigrant arguments such as Labour delivered.

In England and Wales Miliband did try to reconnect with Labour's traditional voting base but didn't dare to break consistently and clearly with Blairism by blaming the cuts and austerity on the bankers, the bailout of the banks and the consequent spiralling of the national debt. Why? Because this would have

meant a real and serious self-criticism for the bailout under Brown. Instead Balls apologized for over-spending on the public sector and welfare, reinforcing the Tories' big lie that the crisis was caused by Labour's investment in health, schools and services.

The only alternative would have been to have explicitly broken from the cuts/austerity agenda and to argue for "making the rich pay". All Miliband's soft left policies – like the Mansion Tax, the freeze on energy bills, clamping down on non-dom tax breaks, limiting zero-hours contracts – were hugely popular. But they were set in a confused and incoherent context of child benefit cuts, commitments to fiscal control, tight limits to public spending. Janus-faced, Labour couldn't capitalise on opposition to austerity, couldn't rouse an enthusiastic alternative to the Tories.

This meant that when the Tories and their press tried to frighten middle class opinion in England with the 'threat' of a Labour-SNP government pursuing an anti-austerity agenda, those same English voters bought it, partly because given Labour's policy they barely heard the case against austerity.

Now, scarcely able to conceal their delight at Labour's defeat, the Blairites are on the rampage, blaming the fallen Miliband for alienating Middle England with mansion taxes and rent controls. In fact Miliband and his trade union backers would have had to move much further left to keep hold of Scotland and unseat the Tories in England. The Blairites' argue that no left-wing Labour Party can ever be elected and the party must move back to the centre, break with the unions, and reach out to the aspirational, modern, middle classes and workers in the new economy.

The answer to this self-serving crypto-Tory rubbish is simple, but we won't be hearing much of it on the TV and in the Labour Party over the weeks and months ahead. It is this:

If left-wing anti-austerity policies alienate voters, how come they just won overwhelmingly in Scotland?

If Miliband's soft centre-leftism was not right wing or pro-business enough to win in the centres of the 'aspirational modern, new economy', then how come Labour advanced strongly in London on 7 May?

If it is somehow wrong for the unions to influence Labour, why isn't it wrong for big business to influence the Tories? Why shouldn't our class have an instrument of its own, just as the bosses have? What's the point of winning elections if it leads to more neoliberal austerity anyway?

At the end of the day, elections express the balance of forces in the class struggle, the level of political consciousness, confidence, organisation and direction of the respective social classes. The stark fact is that the 2015 election reflected a working class movement that had already suffered a very significant defeat

100 day offensive

Class to prepare its defences - and the desire for resistance that makes this possible

from which it has not begun to recover.

This was the failure of the labour, trade union, student and socialist organisations to create and maintain a movement of resistance that had the scale, longevity, tactics or leadership to defeat the ConDem offensive in 2010-11. The high point of the struggle, after the students were left to fight energetically but alone, was a few one-day 'coordinated strikes', each of which was answered enthusiastically by union members but was then disorganised and wound down by the union leaders. In this Len McCluskey, the national figurehead of the left and leader of Unite, Britain's biggest union and Labour's biggest paymaster, is the one most culpable for The Farce Last Time.

Where then for the left in this new difficult situation?

In the economic or industrial struggle, we need to promote campaigns for strike action, backed by marches and occupations, against the Tory cuts, against closures, against sell-offs and pay freezes. This can only happen by working now to form a cross-union rank and file movement to both pressure union leaders to act and prepare to take action without them when necessary. The local and regional People's Assemblies can be rallying points for this, if they go beyond platforms for speakers and become democratic, delegate-based organisations, local coordinations of struggle, that can make decisions and launch actions, challenging official leaders when need be and wresting control of strikes and actions from them when possible. This means organising people from across the trade unions, local campaigns, socialist and antiracist groups and, yes, the Labour Party. With nine million votes, the affiliation of several large trade unions comprising millions of members, with strong growth in support in London and as the official opposition, the very notion that Labour is about to disappear, that we have already heard from some of the more superficial commentators on the left, is simply absurd.

In the political struggle, we need to encourage and support any left-wingers left in the Labour Party to stand firm against the Blairite challenge, whether it comes from Blair's preferred candidate Chuka Umunna or elsewhere, and to stand on a clear programme of opposition to austerity, to all cuts, to militarism and war. But we can put next to no hope in such a challenge being successful, nor in the soft left doing anything other than knuckling down under the Blairite Restoration. Therefore we need to redouble efforts to move towards the formation of a new mass working class party.

McCluskey repeatedly toys with this idea without having the slightest intention of doing anything about it. In this - just as he toys with the idea of a general strike - he simultaneously recognises the strategic necessities of the resistance, and obstructs efforts to realise them. Therefore trade unionists need to push for their funds to be redirected to a na-

The Tories will try to push through a series of attacks in the next 100 days - it is vital that we use this period to lay the foundation of a genuinely mass and united anti-cuts movement

tional conference for working class representation, and the existing parties and initiatives of the left - TUSC, Left Unity and their component groupings - need to push for this too, with the simple goal of founding a new party, one with a clear name and recognisable banner that workers could actually rally to. And this needs to base itself firmly not on electioneering every few years, but on supporting, promoting and extending social and community struggles, like the resistance to gentrification and the housing crisis that is spreading across east and south London, and like the localised resistance to the Bedroom Tax and evictions, which must surely now assume an organised national form.

As the Tories work hard to push through their counter-reforms we need to try our best to mobilise massive protests outside parliament and nationwide, as students did over tuition fees and the EMA in November 2010, and as the union leaders should have done when Lansley's NHS "reforms" were being debated. The aim should be to stop them being implemented and make them unworkable.

This means we need a new party whose number one priority is waging the class struggle, fighting to beat the Tory attacks through action, before the next election. This means the party should debate and adopt an action programme that sets out the way to beat the Tories and links it to the fight for an anticapitalist workers' government and social revolution.

In the theoretical struggle, we will need to challenge the inevitable ideological consequence of defeat: a surge of revisionism from the left-wing intelligentsia, which jumps at setbacks for the working class to promote strategic accommodation to the middle class and to liberalism. In 2015 they will suggest that the working class and the labour movement cannot beat the Tories, that structural changes in British capitalism like the decline of manufacturing mean that the working class cannot win, that while the working class may still be a fundamentally revolutionary class somewhere, this one isn't, and that 'non-class' populism alone can secure a majority of the people, so the left should join the Greens and/or the SNP or Plaid Cymru, or at least reach a strategic accommodation with them. In fact, of course, the radical policies of the middle class Greens and the bourgeois nationalists are sign that their leaders recognise the class interests of Labour's core working class base and try to dislodge it through left-wing rhetoric, as populists have done throughout modern history.

It is one thing for working class people to be swayed by this under the blows of the crisis and Labour's lukewarm policies; it is quite another for the self-identified Marxist left to be taken in by it, as if the words spoken by political leaders were of greater significance than the class forces they represent and the social roots of their political machines. Therefore, whilst always calling on the working class supporters of the nationalists and the Greens to join us on the streets

20 June will be the first test of the labour and socialist movement's capacity to mobilise a show of strength in the capital - let's form organising committees in every town and city

in the struggles against austerity, racism and war, we must absolutely reject any calls for political support for the populists and stand firm on the principle of working class independence. Success in this struggle against the inevitable growth of revisionism in the years ahead depends on the emergence of a strong revolutionary Marxist organisation.

On Europe, the Tories look set to move quickly towards their promised 'In-Out' referendum. It would be disastrous for the left to back those reactionary forces campaigning for British withdrawal. Without giving a single iota of support to the undemocratic institutions of the EU, let alone moves towards consolidating a European imperial power, a Little England outside of Europe would be a huge step backwards for the working class economically and in terms of internationalism and solidarity.

Nor should we campaign for Scotland to leave the UK. Notwithstanding their clean sweep of the seats, the SNP repeatedly insisted that the election was not a referendum on independence and cannot claim that it expresses a majority for secession. Unless and until the Scottish people as a whole want it, socialists have nothing to gain from the creation of a small separate imperialist Scotland alongside an imperialist England and Wales. Yes, if Scotland leaves the UK, the English and Welsh working class will be in a worse position. But so will the Scottish working class, devoid of even the most attenuated political representation, ideologically tied to their bosses through a shared party and a common illusion, unprepared to resist an offensive from a fiscally prudent, experienced, pragmatic bourgeois government in Edinburgh.

The election was notable for an almost total lack of any serious discussion of the great geopolitical and economic changes that are shaping our times. Parties debated the contribution (or not) that immigrants make to British business without mentioning the boatloads of refugees drowning in the Med as they spoke. None offered sanctuary to a single additional refugee. They made joint commitments to defence spending while the Tories and the generals issued bellicose threats to Russia and sent troops to Ukraine. When Miliband so much as mentioned Britain's blame for destabilising Libya, he was met with such a chorus of bourgeois propaganda that he didn't dare mention foreign policy again.

The revival of the left in this new situation must take the opposite starting point - that the bosses' offensive is international, effecting workers everywhere, that solidarity with resistance in Greece, and Spain and Ukraine strengthens us, that the workers of all countries are stronger together, and that the resistance to Tory austerity is part of a broader fight for a socialist united states of Europe. This is the only strategic alternative to the wave of nationalism and parochialism that overran us on 7 May. ●

Crisis and opportunity

Cameron's attempts to deal with Scotland and Europe could backfire



KD TAIT

From an early EU referendum to scrapping the Human Rights Act, from devolving powers to Scotland through to English votes on English laws, the new Tory government has constitutional change firmly in its sights. Their aim will be to see off the hardline Eurosceptics whilst using devolution to decentralise and then dissolve the welfare state.

But the agenda and timescale is not being driven by the Tories alone. They face three big challenges, none fully under their control: the SNP's clean sweep in Scotland, a clamour for English regional devolution, and British capitalism's strategic dilemma over the EU and its project for a federal European state.

Scotland

The No vote in the Scottish independence referendum provoked a huge sigh of relief from the British political and media establishment who feared disaster when faced with polls that had put the two campaigns neck and neck. Gordon Brown's last minute intervention helped swing the result with the "solemn vow", extracted from all the Westminster party leaders, to grant extensive new powers to the Scottish Parliament.

Little was said about these promises until the SNP wipeout of Labour in Scotland and 3.8 million votes for UKIP's anti-European Union platform made it clear that major constitutional issues are unavoidable and will occupy the centre stage for the coming period.

The Tories are determined to compensate themselves for powers 'lost' to Scotland by recasting governance in England and Wales in a way that entrenches their power for a generation. They hope to create new centres of regional authority from which they can override democratic councils and start breaking up public services, especially the NHS.

These anti-democratic changes are designed to create a populist veneer for a programme of privatisation and austerity that they know would otherwise be deeply unpopular.

The SNP's near monopoly of Scottish MPs combined with a Tory majority at Westminster is the dream scenario for Scottish nationalists. In Scotland, even workers not convinced of the separatist project will increasingly see independence as the only defence against Westminster austerity.

Nevertheless, capitalism is capitalism, even in Scotland. The SNP will be obliged to impose cuts and excuse them as the price of partial sovereignty. It is of course a deception that full independence would mean an end to austerity. What it would mean is the SNP exposing its true character as a thoroughly bourgeois party with calls for sacrifices to build the nation while continuing to blame Westminster for their straitened circumstances.

Devolution danger

The concessions promised to insurgent Scottish nationalism have produced their mirror image in demands for greater powers for English MPs over health,



CAMERON FACES A BATTLE TO WIN CONCESSIONS FOR BRITISH BUSINESS FROM EUROPE

welfare, education and civic rights. This is embodied in the Tory pledge to introduce 'English votes for English laws' (Evel), giving English MPs a veto over issues that affect England.

It is already fanning the flames of a reactionary English nationalism which the Tories aim to use to recover ground from UKIP. But it could backfire.

To this we must add plans for regionalisation embodied by George Osborne's 'Northern Powerhouse' plans which will concentrate investment into a few metropolitan cities and enterprise zones, allowing second tier cities to sink into decline. These new entities will be put under the control of Mayors with expansive new powers to override local councils.

The consequences of devolving power to the regions might look attractive on paper – granting greater power to local decision makers. In reality it means huge amounts of public wealth will be handed over to professional managers, with no experience of running such services, people already proven to be in hock to property developers and outsourcing speculators.

The inevitable – and intentional – result will be to accelerate the disintegration of the national welfare state, exacerbate disparity of wealth and services between the metropolises and declining outer regions and pit workers of different regions against each other in competition for diminishing resources.

Eurosceptics, again

Hours after victory, Home Secretary Theresa May's first statement was to reject outright European Union (EU) proposals to alleviate the Mediterranean refugee crisis by imposing quotas for resettlement. The British warships in the

Mediterranean are to turn from rescuing refugees to destroying the boats and fuel dumps of the people smugglers on the North African coast. From Search and Rescue to Search and Destroy.

The new Justice secretary Michael Gove – fresh from his attempts to take education back to the 1950s or maybe the 1850s, will no doubt seek to restore Victorian values here too. After all, in 1998 he wrote an article in the Times claiming that "abolishing hanging... has led to a corruption of our criminal justice system, the erosion of all our freedoms" and advocating "... a fair trial, under the shadow of the noose." He has made his first order of business the repeal of what the Daily Mail calls the 'madness' of the Human Rights Act.

The in/out referendum on EU membership will prove a carnival of reaction. It is the issue around which a miasma of false arguments about economic migrants, asylum seekers and national sovereignty revolve. The Tory (and UKIP) tabloids will do all in their power to make workers believe low wages and shit jobs, queues in hospital A&E or inability to get a doctors appointment, are all the fault of East European immigrants.

The EU is an institution that allows the dominant European powers – France and Germany – to exploit the peripheral countries to their own advantage, which explains why Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Italy have been forced to impose savage austerity. The economic and political union, combined with Nato, enables the European ruling classes to combine forces and act as an imperialist bloc on the world stage, asserting their interests against Russia, China, etc.

This is its function which defines its character as an instrument of capitalist

class rule and why socialists oppose it. But an "independent Britain" outside the EU or an England, Wales and Northern Ireland on their own, would be no less capitalist and no less imperialist than GB Inc. The same is true for an independent Scotland.

Worse still, 'Brexit' would damage British capital's access to its biggest market and the biggest economy in the world. British capital would only be able to reassert itself by an even deeper and absolute relation with the US and an austerity offensive that would make the last five years look like communism.

Anyone in the labour movement who campaigns for a British exit from the EU is acting directly against the interests of the working class.

EU referendum

The referendum will pit two sections of the bourgeoisie against one another. On the one side there is the leadership of the Tory party which wants to renegotiate Britain's membership in favour of British capital, on the other, the Eurosceptic Tory minority and UKIP who pander to the most reactionary and chauvinist strata of the petit-bourgeoisie.

Fomented by the Daily Mail and the Daily Express the petit bourgeoisie chafes against EU legislation that imposes costs and regulations that eat into profit margins, while limiting its ability to drive down employees' wages and working conditions to compensate. For big capital and finance on the other hand, it is a question of defending UK membership of the EU – and the access to cheap migrant labour, markets and services that comes with it.

These are the two choices posed by an EU referendum and both standpoints defend the interests of different sections of our class enemy; it is not in our interests to make a positive choice in favour of either.

Andy Burnham has called for Cameron to call referendum in 2016 a change from Miliband's previous opposition to a referendum. He did so on the basis that British business needs a quick decision to avoid uncertainty and to tighten rules on EU migrants claiming benefits.

This reveals the lessons of joint campaigning with the Tories in the Scottish referendum have not been learned. The Tories are the only winners from this "popular front". Labour must not line up again with the Tories and the bosses. But neither must we do what the left did in the 1970s – line up with the reactionary little Englanders and Europhobes.

Against this bosses' club, revolutionaries advocate a socialist united states of Europe, a free association of nations and peoples, where the working class takes control of production to manage the continent's material, cultural and environmental resources in the interests of the majority of humanity. ●

Populism and political power

Should the faltering advance of Podemos encourage the left to reconsider its model?



DAVE STOCKTON

In the immediate aftermath of Labour's defeat, speakers from the Brick Lane Debates group at the 14 May Radical Left Assembly referred to the Spanish Indignados and Podemos as models to imitate. There was even an attempt to brand the 1,000 people in the hall as the "14M Movement".

Similarly, in Left Unity, a "Podemos Tendency" has been declared proclaiming: "... the methods used by Podemos can be effective in this country ... a shift of focus is needed ... We need to redefine politics from Left vs Right to Us vs Them, creating a new discourse that exposes the privilege of those who hold power in society... we must be more populist and use the tactics and strategies of mass (and new) media in communicating a simpler message."

Workers Power, over the past year, has analysed the development of Podemos' policies and its form of organisation. Despite its 2014 surge in the opinion polls, where it overtook the Peoples Party (PP) and the Socialist Party (PSOE), despite its continued electoral successes – the latest on May 24 in the regional and municipal elections, we have argued that its populist (cross-class, non-socialist) policies and organisation, need be radically transformed if the party is really to be a force for radical systemic change. This would become absolutely critical if they were to win power, either alone or in coalition, in the general election due in November.

When Podemos was founded nearly a year and a half ago, Workers Power welcomed its clear commitment to rejecting austerity and defending public services, raising wages and homelessness, tackling the national vote and 5 seats it won in the European Elections on 25 May last year, only three months after its foundation, promised that it could well imitate the rapid advance of Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left, in Greece. Its roots in a network of 900 local assemblies or *circulos*, promised a radical democratic process of developing policies and choosing representatives.

It was not to be – or rather whilst the horizontalist rhetoric was maintained, a "vertical" system around Pablo Iglesias, openly modeled on Venezuela's *líder máximo* (main leader), Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian populism was established. From June 2014 onwards the supporters of Iglesias, mainly academics from Madrid's Complutense University, determinedly sidelined the other group who had been co-founders of Podemos and drafters of the successful EU election platform - Izquierda Anticapitalista (Anti-Capitalist Left), supporters of the Fourth International in Spain. They were eventually pressured into dissolving themselves.

The result was the creation of a monolithic centralised leadership – the so-called "Iglesias Team". This was reinforced by the on-line voting for Iglesias as general secretary of the party, a plebiscite that he, as a TV

celebrity, easily won. When Podemos' 8000 strong Citizens Assembly met on 18 and 19 October 2014, it confirmed this veritable coup d'état. After this Iglesias set about steering the organisation firmly towards the centre ground. Since then the rightward movement has continued.

On 5 May, Pablo Iglesias presented Podemos' manifesto for the local elections on May 24. It promises a "citizens' bailout", meaning increased social welfare for the poorest, but excluded any more radical proposals such as suspending home evictions, lowering the retirement age or imposing a moratorium on debt.

These omissions are all casualties of Podemos' attempt to dominate the political centre. Iglesias believes this is the way Podemos can sweep past the parties of *la casta* (the caste), i.e. the political establishment that has dominated Spain since the dismantling of the dictatorship in 1978.

Electoralism

This rightward turn has provoked an open clash within the group of academics at the heart of Podemos. Professor Juan Carlos Monedero, often referred to as the "brains" of the project, has resigned, revealing that there are "tensions at the heart of Podemos" between "people who are more moderate, and people who want to stick to our origins".

Monedero claims that that the party is beginning to resemble the political forces of the very caste it is seeking to replace. Last year, Podemos proclaimed its fundamental difference lay in its grass roots *circulos* which would develop policy. Now, according to Monedero, "Podemos is falling into these kinds of problems because it no longer has the time to meet with the small circles, because it is more important to get one minute of TV airtime or to do something that adds to the collective strategy."

Even more ironic, given his role, was his observation that when a party's sole aim becomes "reaching power" it "joins the electoral game and starts becoming hostage to the worst aspects of the state."

The Podemos project was entirely about appropriating the language of a mass movement, and funneling support into a disciplined electoral machine that would install Iglesias, Monedero, Errejón and co. in Spain's parliament within 18 months. Although it based itself on the *circulos* of activists, it never saw them as the embryos of fighting organisations that would, themselves, seize power from the 'caste' and thereby create the direct democracy talked about by the Indignados, the 15M movement of 2011.

Whether or not Monedero's newfound criticisms have more to do with his ejection from the inner clique than with political principles, the important point is that these differences over direction were not taken to the membership. The outcome was decided by the resignation of the loser in what amounts to a clique fight.

Hegemony or power

These problems are not just a result of an opportunist move to capture the centre ground, they flow from fundamental flaws in Podemos' political method.

The project consciously rejects any class characterisation, any identification with the labour movement or anticapitalist measures, let alone a socialist goal. It even rejected placing itself on the left of the political spectrum.

Instead, it used the terminology of "the people" versus "the caste". It emphasised corruption rather than exploitation and posed 'democracy' and social-democratic reforms as the solutions to the economic and social problems of neoliberalism. This is because for Podemos, the strategic goal is to win the general election at all costs.

To do that, it thinks it is essential to avoid any policy, even any terminology that is unacceptable to the whole of the "99 per cent". This, it believes, will allow it to establish ideological hegemony over the electorate, displacing the neoliberal 'narrative' or 'discourse' of the caste with its own populist one.

The great flaw in this strategy is not just that much of it can be adopted by right wing populism, as new party Ciudadanos (Citizens) has already shown, but that, even if it is successful in its own terms, and leads to an electoral victory, it does not challenge the real roots of capitalist power. They lie in the ownership and control of the economy itself, not in the chambers of parliament.

Nor would electoral victory mean a fundamental change in popular consciousness, that will only occur through the self-transforming activity of the working class in struggle. As Rosa Luxemburg liked to quote from Goethe's *Faust*, "in the beginning was the deed." It is of course natural for the academic intelligentsia, the ideas people, the wordsmiths, to believe, with the Bible, that "in the beginning is the Word".

Power

The dilemma that is facing Syriza today, and would face a Podemos government in future, shows what Marxists and, in particular, Leninists, have always claimed. It is the enormous economic power of the capitalist class, backed up by the repressive forces of their state, that proves decisive.

If a government limits seeks to limit itself to reforms it believes are compatible with the interests of the ruling class then, clearly, the repressive power of that class must not be touched. On the other hand, if it tries to implement measures that actually threaten vital interests of that class, it will provoke a counter-attack; that class, it will provoke a counter-attack; that class, it will provoke a counter-attack; that class, it will provoke a counter-attack.

This is the central dilemma of reformism and it applies whether the party involved is socialist, Labour, social democratic or left populist. The difference between these is

whether or not the party in question has organic roots in the working class, for example, via the trade unions.

For those who believe in the ability of the working class to carry out a revolutionary transformation of society, it is an elementary duty to point out which class currently rules society and how it rules. It is equally fundamental to explain that to break the dictatorship of the capitalist class requires a social force greater than that of the existing state. It will never be sufficient for the existing state. It will never be sufficient for the existing state. It will never be sufficient for the existing state. It will never be sufficient for the existing state.

No model

In Britain, the adoption of Podemos-style populism would be no answer to our problems. It would mean abandoning any clear view of the nature of the different classes in society. The capitalist class cannot be reduced to a political Establishment of Bullingdon Boys or corrupt City fat cats. Their "privileges" are only a symptom, not a cause, of what is wrong with society.

It is not enough to plan merely to tax the wealth they expropriate from workers all over the world. That leaves their system of ownership and control intact and allows them to mobilise all their resources for a counter-attack. The only way to remove their power is to expropriate their property, to take all the essential economic factors into social ownership without compensation. Only the working class can do this because it is the only class that does not itself rely on private ownership of productive property.

While it is certainly true that contrasting the "99 per cent" to the "1 per cent" highlights the grotesque inequality of capitalist society, it nonetheless disguises the fact that a significant proportion of the "99 percent", particularly in an imperialist country like Britain, are engaged in maintaining the system of wage exploitation and materially benefit from it.

Populism, represented in Britain by the SNP, the Greens and UKIP, collapses all classes into an undifferentiated "people" and in so doing obscures class consciousness and obstructs the class struggle necessary to fundamentally change society. When admirers of Podemos propose junking the concepts of class politics, they are actually disarming the working class and preparing the way for its defeat.

Such chasing after populist solutions by members of the left intelligentsia is a sign of their own disillusion and demoralisation. Typically, they blame all our ills on the working class's supposed lack of militancy or socialist consciousness, or claim it has disappeared altogether. While they may believe they have found a new strategy, they have, in fact, rediscovered something very old, and long discredited. ●

Tightening the noose

New anti-strike laws could neutralise a powerful weapon in the fight against cuts



JEREMY DEWAR

Tory Business Secretary Sajid Javid's anti-democratic measures to restrict strikes and legalise scabbing have the aim of breaking resistance to austerity. As TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady warned, they want to "make legal strikes close to impossible".

The new law's aim is to weaken the trade unions ability to mount national strikes and industrial action in public services. They hope this will lead to a catastrophic fall in union membership.

By "essential services" they mean in fact most public services: health, transport, fire brigades and education.

Why? Because these constitute the remaining stronghold of the unions, include those with the most left wing leaderships, and those that mounted resistance to the last round of austerity.

Anti-strike laws

The new anti-union law, to be included in the Queen's Speech, will impose further restrictions on the right to strike by requiring all strike ballots to achieve a 50 per cent turnout and those in essential services to win 40 per cent of all those eligible to vote for action.

The first new anti-union law for 20 years will also make it legal for employers to hire agency workers to break strikes. Before now bosses have got round the law by hiring a new workforce and locking out unionised workers, or by transferring work to a different site. But this makes it much easier to run scab operations.

The proposal effectively means counting abstentions as votes against strike action and demanding a 50 per cent turnout is reminiscent of the discredited law to transfer council estates to housing associations.

Unite Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner pointed out "this proposal is coming from a new administration with just 36.9 per cent of the vote". Talk about hypocrisy.

Add to this the obstacles placed in the way of increasing participation and the full extent of this assault on democracy emerges. Civil service departments and even, disgracefully, some Labour councils are cutting shop stewards' facility time, while withdrawing the check-off system, which deducts membership fees at source, forcing the unions to retain members by collecting subs in cash or via direct debits.

Of course the only way to increase union membership, participation and activity is through greater rank and file authority and control. But here the union leaders are nearly always absolutely steadfast against handing over their powers to the members on the ground.



NEW LAW COULD MAKE STRIKE TO DEFEND NHS IMPOSSIBLE

So who are the laws immediately aimed at?

The National Union of Teachers, Public and Commercial Services union, the Rail Maritime and Transport union and Fire Brigades Union have all been at the forefront of resistance to neoliberalism at one point or another over the past 15 years. All provide vital services to millions. All are in the firing line.

The private sector could also be hit. The Royal Mail, colleges and even petrochemical workers at Grangemouth, who could stem the flow of petrol to Scotland and the north of England: are they "essential services"? Given the proven militancy of their workforces in the Communication Workers Union, the Universities and Colleges Union and Unite, probably.

The big three unions – Unite, Unison and the GMB – who brought out millions on one day strikes in health, local government and across the public sector over pensions and pay would all find it very hard at present to deliver turnouts and winning margins close to the Tory benchmarks.

Yet the new round of austerity – alongside the measures of the first round that have yet to be implemented – will decimate public services and jobs. The pay freeze will be reimposed and increasingly supplemented by deskilling, downgrading, forced unpaid overtime and actual pay cuts.

In short, the unions will be tested very, very quickly. Will they step up to the mark?

There has been some fighting talk from our leaders. RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said: "The trade unions will unite to fight these attacks." Unite leader Len McCluskey warned before the election, "should there be a Conservative majority in May, there will be a new attack on trade union rights and democracy... When the law is misguided, when it op-

presses the people and removes their freedoms, can we respect it? I am not really posing the question. I'm giving you the answer. It ain't going to happen."

Unite will now debate removing the words "so far as is lawful" from its description of supportable strike action in its rulebook at a special conference this summer.

Unfortunately we have heard this sort of fighting talk before. But talk is what it always remains. The bitter truth is that the union leaders have frittered away the last five years of austerity on marches that led nowhere, and one-day strikes that led to sell-outs.

What to do

As soon as the Green Paper is published and its parliamentary timetable announced trade unionist activists, with the help of the whole anti-cuts movement, should launch a series of demonstrations, workplace meetings and local rallies to alert workers to the severity of the attack and agitate for action.

Resistance must include the fight against all the other anti-union measures aimed at breaking up the public sector strongholds of trade unionism. It should also focus on solidarity action with sectors – like the Network Rail workers – about to, or currently taking action.

Left caucuses in the unions and the socialist organisations should organise a conference to launch such a campaign from below. We should not wait for the union leaders or smother criticism of them. But neither can we just ignore them. The left in the unions should put emergency motions to upcoming union conferences and to the TUC demanding that they put their full resources, local and national, behind the movement to kill the anti-union bill.

Labour MPs too (indeed any parties claiming to be "left" or sympathetic to the unions) must be pressured into filibustering the bill in parliament whilst tens of thousands demonstrate outside of it.

Doubtless some people will argue that workers lack the confidence, or the shopfloor organisation to do this and have lost the traditions of mounting such defiance. But such traditions are not built gradually in times of peace and quiet, but start from surprise and indignation at the injustice of such an attack.

If we can build such a wave of anger and mass protest, then the issue of industrial action will be put back on the agenda. And in those circumstances it becomes not just a matter of stopping new anti-union laws, but forcing the repeal of all the old ones passed by Thatcher and Major and left in place Blair and Brown.

Rank and file activists should campaign inside the unions for a policy of open defiance of the anti-union laws, old and new, with strike action at the heart of their strategy. Any union that is taken to court, fined or shackled should be backed up with solidarity action, up to and including a general strike.

United Action

To fight this vicious Tory government we need to meet David Cameron's much-vaunted first 100 days in office with 100 days of resistance.

We cannot wait for the signal for action to come from the top union leaders. The last five years shows that – aside from speechifying at union conferences – resistance will not start with them. But amongst workforces under attack and community based campaigns – defending hospitals against closures, fighting against gentrification and for social housing, – it has never stopped. What these struggles need is greater coordination and the realisation that we now face an even more united enemy. We ourselves need to be more united, both locally and nationally too. Rank and file unionists in workplaces and local branches, need to set up local action committees to win the wider working class to the defence of jobs, wages, services and conditions.

We need a drive to unionise and fight for the rights of casual, precarious and zero-hours workers, and a campaign to encourage a new layer of shop stewards to retain existing and recruit new members.

The severity of the battles ahead mean that either we raise our game, transform our organisations into more effective fighting bodies or the setbacks we have suffered so far will be as nothing to what Cameron and Osborne mean to inflict. ●