Alistair Darling has admitted that public spending cuts and chancellor Gordon Brown's Labour Party are driving a massive shift to the right in British public finances. Above all, both are committed to making the working class pay for the enormous deficit in Britain's public finances.

The 2008 financial meltdown and the worldwide crisis that followed had a devastating impact on the British economy. The burden, which is being heaped onto the British working class, is proportionally higher than elsewhere largely because Britain's financial sector is so bloated relative to the rest of the economy. With public borrowing as a share of national income forecast to be the highest in the G20 group of the largest world economies, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and a budget deficit that is higher than that of Greece, the European Commission warned that Britain must take tougher measures to cut its deficit by 2015.

Both Labour and Tories know that to tell the truth about the state of the economy would be suicidal in electoral terms. But whoever forms the next government will implement massive public spending cuts and chancellor Alistair Darling has admitted that Labour will cut "deeper and tougher" than Margaret Thatcher did in the 1980s. Since the beginning of the present economic crisis, half a million people have lost their jobs and according to one estimate a British property is repossessed every eleven minutes. Economic analyst John Lanchester sums up the situation saying: "We had the longest period of sustained economic growth since records began, followed by the longest period of sustained economic contraction since records began, all of it under the leadership of a government that repeatedly and explicitly promised "an end to boom and bust"." (The Great British Economy Disaster, London Review of Books, 11 March).

Lanchester predicts cuts amounting to around eleven percent across the board, rising to 16 percent in certain areas, which he notes are of a magnitude never before achieved in this country, while "a two extracted through exploitation of workers around the world."

The working class needs a party that fights for its own class interests. We fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, part of a Leninist-Trotskyist international, dedicated to the task of fighting for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist order. Boom-and-bust cycles are endemic to the capitalist system. But whatever forms the new government before that which is also the root cause of all exploitation and oppression. Fundamental change in the interests of the working people can only come about through revolutionary international class struggle which must shatter the framework of capitalism worldwide. Socialist revolution will be the basis for rationally planned economies based on production for need, not for profit and for a qualitative development of the productive forces, opening the road to the elimination of poverty, scarcity and want and to the creation of an egalitarian socialist society.

Labour government racism bolsters BNP

The run-up to the election has been marked by an ominous increase in fascist activity. On the one hand the British National Party (BNP) has been running a high-profile election campaign, spreading racist filth against immigrants and Muslims, while on the streets the English Defence League (EDL) has been staging violent anti-Muslim provocations in various cities. A protest by Unite Against Fascism (UAF) against the EDL in Bolton on 20 March was viciously attacked by the police who arrested prominent leftists and anti-fascists. UAF leader and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member Weyman Bennett was held by police on outrageous charges of "conspiracy to commit violent disorder" (Morning Star, 22 March). We say: Drop the charges against Weyman Bennett and all anti-fascist protesters!

Fascists are paramilitary shock troops dedicated to racist terror who aim to smash the organisations of the working class. BNP and EDL provocations must be met with massive protests, centre on the trade unions mobilised in defence of Muslims, immigrants and all their intended victims. However, Marxists understand that the deaying capitalist system breeds the social conditions for the growth of the fascists, thus the struggle against fascism is inseparable from the fight for socialist revolution. Mobilising the social power of the multiethnic working class in a fight for jobs and for the rights of immigrants and minorities is anathema to the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, which aims to keep the unions tied to the capitalist order. The fascists have intervened heavily into the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers that began at Lindsey oil refinery in January 2009 under the slogan of "British jobs for British workers". This has long been a rallying cry of the fascists (see "Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!" Workers Hammer no 206, Spring 2009).

Disgracefully, these strikes were championed by the Socialist Party as well as by the Unite trade union bureaucracy and by Bob Crow, leader of the RMT. These unions — which consist of white, black and Asian workers — have enormous potential power that can hit the capitalists where it hurts. But Crow and the leadership of Unite have kept the lid on class struggle under Labour and the Unite bureaucrats have done their utmost to sell out their members who are on strike against British
Father of China's missile programme

Qian Xuesen: an appreciation

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no. 952, 12 February 2010.

When Qian Xuesen (Tsien Hsue-shen), the father of China’s space programme, died in October at the age of 98, his story dominated the news on the Chinese mainland. In contrast, Qian’s death received subdued notice in the US, which had expelled him in the anti-Communist campaign of the mid-1950s. A household name in China, Qian was widely regarded as a hero for his contributions to military defence and technological development, including China’s nuclear capacity. His funeral, held at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing, was attended by some 10,000 people, including all the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), such as President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and former president Jiang Zemin. As Trotskyists — i.e., revolutionary proletarian internationalists — we also salute Qian for his substantial contributions to the defence of China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, against the imperialist powers, centrally the US.

In the story of Qian’s life and accomplishments is recounted in Iris Chang’s compelling 1995 biography, Thread of the Silkworm. Qian was born to a privileged family in Hangzhou in 1911, the year the decrepit Qing Dynasty fell. He became part of a generation of intellectuals who were determined to bring China into the modern world, liberated from imperialist domination. To that end, he began his studies in railway engineering at Jiaotong University in Shanghai. The campuses were in upheaval, with students protesting both Japan’s 1931 invasion of Manchuria and Chiang Kai-shek’s corrupt, brutal Guomindang (Nationalist) regime, which was reviled for its subservience to Japanese imperialism. After witnessing the impact of Japan’s aerial bombardment of Shanghai in 1932, Qian turned to aeronautical engineering.

To further its own imperialist interests, the US had established a scholarship programme — funded by indemnities extracted from China after the closing of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 — aimed at cultivating a layer of Chinese intellectual leaders. Qian Xuesen was chosen to receive a Boxer indemnity scholarship, arriving in the US in 1935. Beginning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Qian transferred to Caltech in Pasadena the following year, where he began a long collaboration with his mentor, Theodore von Kármán, a giant in aeronautics.

Qian became a brilliant scientist, one of the founders of Pasadena’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He made significant contributions to the US imperialist military, including as part of the Manhattan Project, which developed the first atomic bomb during World War II. At the end of the war, he was part of a team that went to Germany to interrogate rocket scientists. There he saw concentration camps where slave labourers had assembled V-2 rockets and he interviewed the Nazi scientist Wernher von Braun, who would be welcomed with open arms to the US where Qian would later be driven out.

In 1949, Qian wrote a proposal for a winged space plane that, as Aviation Week and Space Technology wrote in 2007, instantly caught the eye of NASA. He was also involved in China’s post-WWII Cold War drive against the imperialist forces. The fact that the workers state that issued the Boxer indemnity to the US to help against the Boxer Rebellion, was reviled for its subservience to imperialism.

Qian Xuesen in 1948

Qian became a target of the McCarthyite witch hunts that swept the US after American imperialism launched its post-WWII Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. The anti-Communist hysteria that followed the Chinese Communist Party’s seizure of power in 1949, which marked the overthrow of capitalist rule in China, and the outbreak of the Korean War the following year, Qian’s security clearance was abruptly lifted in June 1950. He came under special scrutiny by the FBI after he refused to testify against a friend alleged to be the leader of an American Communist Party (CP) cell in Pasadena. Qian was interrogated by the FBI and accused of having been a member of the CP, which he denied.

Hounded by the Feds, Qian decided to leave for China for an extended stay but was stopped at the airport by INS immigration cops. He was arrested in September 1950 and imprisoned for two weeks. During that time he lost 20 pounds and was kept in isolation, denied sleep and denied visits from all but his family. The INS issued a deportation order against Qian, but he was simultaneously prevented from leaving. He was not alone in that legal limbo. As Iris Chang noted in The Chinese in America (2003), following the 1949 Revolution, “some 120 Chinese intellectuals were detained and not permitted to leave for years” on the grounds that their “knowledge might jeopardize national security”. Nearly 50 years later, Chinese American scientist Wen Ho Lee was the target of another racist, anti-Communist witch hunt due to which he lost his job at Los Alamos and was thrown in jail on trumped-up charges of spying for China (see “Chinese Spy” Hysteria Whips Up Anti-Asian Racism”, Workers Vanguard no. 719, 17 September 1999).

Qian faced constant FBI surveillance and harassment. Forbidden to leave Los Angeles, he was followed on the street, his mail opened, his home watched and his phone tapped. In 1955, he wrote a letter asking the Chinese government’s help to get him back to China. His wife addressed the envelope to her sister, disguising her handwriting to resemble a child’s. Qian and his wife managed to elude the FBI to send a letter in a mailbox at a coffee shop, from which it eventually reached Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. Follow-up negotiations later that year between Washington and Beijing, which involved a swap for prisoners from the Korean War, Qian was deported and returned to China.

Immediately upon his return, Qian threw himself into scientific work on behalf of the People’s Republic. The establishment of a planned, collectivised economy enabled China to deal with a hereditary rural poverty and backwardness — to make historic social advances. This is despite the fact that the workers state that issued the Boxer indemnity to the US to help against the Boxer Rebellion was reviled for its subservience to imperialism.

Qian Xuesen was chosen to direct an architecture of national defence. In 1956, he was appointed director of the project to develop China’s nuclear weapons. In 1964, his team successfully tested its first atomic bomb. The first hydrogen bomb followed in 1967. And in 1970, Qian’s team successfully launched China’s first satellite, Dongfanghong 1.

Qian Xuesen was one of the founders of the Chinese Anti-Imperialist League, a Marxist-Leninist mass movement of intellectuals. Qian Xuesen was always a proponent of the defence of China against imperialism. In 1979, he was president of the COSPAC (Committee of Scientists for Peace and Anti-Armament), which lobbied the US Congress to oppose the US military threat.

Qian Xuesen, a brilliant scientist and founder of the Chinese Anti-Imperialist League, dedicated his life to the defence of China against imperialist aggression. He was a true Marxist-Leninist internationalist, dedicated to the task of defending his country against the imperialist threat. His legacy lives on in the continued struggle of the Chinese people to defend their country against the imperialist threat.
We print below a 13 March letter sent to the Home Office by the Partisan Defence Committee, a class-struggle, legal and political defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League. The letter protests the conviction and jailing of youth, mainly working-class people, who have taken part in London protests against Israel’s war on Gaza a little over a year ago. There were many political sentences as more cases come before the courts.

Comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain and other International Communist League (ICL) sections internationally participated in protests while the Zionist mass murder machine pounded the Gaza ghetto in air assaults followed by a devastating ground invasion, terrorising and killing Palestinian men, women and children. The ICL called for the working class internationally to stand for military defence of Hamas without giving that reactionary Islamic fundamentalist outfit one iota of political support. We demanded: Defend the Palestinian people! All Zionist soldiers and settlers out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem!

Unlike the Zionists and indeed the anti-Semitic Islamic fundamentalists, we do not equate the Zionist state with the Palestinian people, who have the right to self-determination as well as the Palestinian people. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is one of interpenetrated peoples: two peoples laying claim to the same piece of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of national self-determination by one will necessarily be at the expense of the other. As long as the national principle prevails, the oppression of the Palestinians, who are the weaker side, can only worsen. As Marxists we seek to bring the class question to the fore, insisting on the need for proletarian revolutionary parties to fight workers revolutions to shatter the Zionist state from within and to sweep away the mullahs, colonels, sheikhs and all the other capitalist rulers. Defence of those subjugated by the imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in Britain, the US and other imperialist centres, pointing towards a proletarian struggle for power.

For Arab/Hebrew workers revolution! For a socialist federation of the Near East!

We protect the outrageous convictions and sentences meted out to youth arrested during the December 2008-January 2009 London protests against Israel’s slaughter in Gaza. Reportedly of 119 arrested, some 26 have so far been sentenced and 22 sent to jail for terms ranging from eight months to two-and-a-half years, for such trivial acts as throwing placards. The arrests followed months of surveillance by the police, who descended on homes like storm-troopers in dawn raids during which family members were handcuffed in separate rooms.

These youth, almost all Muslims and many under 20 years old, were expressing justified rage at the bloodbath carried out by the Zionists in Gaza. Israel’s war left 1400 Palestinians dead and thousands injured, and reduced most of Gaza — already essentially a concentration camp surrounded by an electrified fence, a sealed border with Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea — to ash and rubble. The jailings for protest against this atrocity underline British imperialism’s solidarity with the Zionist butchers.

Judge John Dennis, in handing down the sentences at Isleworth Crown Court in Middlesex, has stated his intent to send a message of “deterrence”. The message, broadcast loud and clear in the convictions and sentences, is one of naked state racism otherwise known as the government’s “war on terror”, which is an anti-Muslim witch hunt. In fact the judge reportedly relied on the precedent of the draconian sentences handed out to young Asians jailed for defending their communities from rampaging fascists in Bradford in 2001. Then too such “lessons” were delivered in the form of six-year prison terms for throwing stones. The fruit of this poison relentlessly dished up by the Blair and Brown Labour governments is the growth of the fascist BNP and their spin-offs, the English Defence League, who parade their anti-Muslim filth.

We demand: Free the jailed proletarian protesters now! Drop all the charges!

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We demand: Free the jailed proletarian protesters now! Drop all the charges!
The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 955, 26 March 2014.

It is now more than two months since Haiti was struck by the earthquake that killed over 200,000 of its nine million people dead. The quake has multiplied the desperate conditions of what was already one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Even before the devastation wreaked by it, nearly one out of every three Haitians had no regular access to drinking water and more than half the population survived on less than one dollar a day. Two centuries of exploitative administration of President René Préval—a fig-leaf for a United Nations occupation regime—installed in 2006 at US imperialism’s behest, has been sent to the country, as well as an interim Washington-appointed US military force of 1500 troops.

In response to the quake, a range of pseudo-socialist groups in the US rallied to back President Préval and his government, and to do right by the Haitian people and send “aid not troops”. In this, groups like the Marxist-Leninist Organiz­ation (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) served only to aid Democrat Obama, whose election they had hailed, but at the same time, some 2000 additional UN troops have been sent to the country, as well as an additional US military presence in the Western Hemisphere.

As part of a “relief effort”, the Obama administration dispatched some 20,000 troops and a flotilla of naval vessels for the day. At least in order to pre­vent Haitians from fleeing to the US and to shore up the UN occupation force, we were not guided by the quakes relentless impact on Haiti.

In the immediate aftermath of that horrific natural disaster, the immediate withdrawal of any forces that were belligerent imperialist powers in that interimperialist slaughter, while stand­ing for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

But while the circumstances were different than those in Haiti today, the Marxist method outlined by our Trotskyist forebears remains fully valid. To call on the imperialists to provide aid means taking “responsibility for bourgeois governmental policy”. Drawing out the logic of the Stalinists’ position, the SWP article added: “Were we to agi­late for aid to the Soviet Union by the Roosevelt government, would we then not be compelled to favor convoys to guarantee the arrival of the material shipped to the Soviet Union? Should we then not demand that the waters to Vladivostok be kept open by the U.S. government against Japan? Indeed, the Stalinists’ call for imperialist aid was part and parcel of their support to the “dem­ocratic” imperialists in World War II.

The key to the whole question consists in the understanding that we cannot rely on bourgeois governments to aid our cause.” The SWP was addressing the demand of the Stalinist Communist Party that the US provide aid to the Soviet Union following the June 1941 Nazi invasion amid the Second World War. The Trotskyists opposed all the belligerent imperialist powers in that inter­nationalist slaughter, while stand­ing for the unconditional military defence of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

Meanwhile, the Obama administra­tion’s vaunted offer of temporary legal status for undocumented Haitian immi­grants in the US has been shown to be a sham that it is, as only a small per­centage of these immigrants has been able to afford the $500 application fees for the legal permits. Anybody who has made it to the US should have the right to stay and work here. Down with the racist ban on Haitian refugees! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

The notion purveyed by reformists like the ISO and WWP that US imperi­alism can be cajoled or pressured into serving the needs of the oppressed, rather than its own class interests, shows boundless illusions in the good offices of the rapacious American ruling class. Such illusion-mongering goes hand in hand with fawning over Third World populist nationalists like Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose government that was restored to the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince in 1994 by a US invasion force after being ousted by a (US-backed) military coup. Aristide was then subsequently whisked away by the US and put in jail.

Taking up the left flank of the reformists is the centrist International Group (IG). In a 20 October letter, the IG grotesquely and cynically claimed that the earthquake provided an opening for social revolution in Haiti. “Partic­ularly at present where the machinery of the capitalist state is largely reduced to rubble and a few remaining bands of police”. As we wrote in response in Workers Vanguard no 951, “not only is the state ‘largely reduced to rubble’, but so is the society as a whole”, underlin­ing that “there is a military power in Haiti that is far from ‘reduced to rub­ble’, and it’s ‘US imperialism’. Indeed, the only force that seemed to share the IG’s delusions of an uprising in Haiti after the quake was the Pentagon.

Yet the IG denounced us as “support­ing imperialism” because we didn’t call for “a US face lift” for Haiti, and it’s ‘US imperialism’. Indeed, the only force that seemed to share the IG’s delusions of an uprising in Haiti after the quake was the Pentagon. Meanwhile, the “revolutionary populists” of the world populist nationalists like Aristide, whose government that was restored to the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince in 1994 by a US invasion force after being ousted by a (US-backed) military coup. Aristide was then subsequently whisked away by the US and put in jail.

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On 19 January, the US Supreme Court took a clear step towards the legal lynching of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The Court vacated a 2001 decision by federal district court judge William Yohn overturning Mumia's death sentence. Yohn's decision had been previously upheld by the US Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The new ruling by the Supreme Court underscores our insistence that fighters for Mumia's freedom must place no faith in the courts, which, at every level, have colluded with the police and prosecutors to see through the execution of this innocent man.

Mumia was targeted by the police and FBI in his teenage years as a Black Panther leader and later as a journalist and his super-fame as a caricature of the swaggering cop. Mumia was railroaded to death row in 1982 on false charges of murdering Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Without a shred of actual evidence against him, he was convicted on the basis of phony ballistics and other manufactured "evidence", a "confession" concocted by cops and prosecutors, massive police intimidation, and racist jury rigging. His trial was overseen by "hanging judge" Albert Sabo, who was overheard saying he would help the prosecution "fly the n------". To secure the death sentence, prosecutors pointed to political statements issued by Mumia as a 16-year-old Panther.

Since his trial, the courts have repeatedly failed to provide adequate or evidence of Mumia's innocence, not least the confession of Arnold Beverly that he, not Mumia, shot and killed the police officer. Mumia remains unbowed, speaking out for his powerlessness and powerfullfulful commentary. The Court is consciously manipulating the discourse of race and the law to perpetuate the racist capitalist class-struggle, non-racist legal and social order organisation, and the law as the tool of the in power.

The Supreme Court, moving to support Mumia with cold calculation. Last April, it turned down Mumia's petition to overturn his death sentence. The same time, the Court held in abeyance the arguments of Pennsylvania prosecutors to reinstate his death sentence, which had been overturned by Yohn on the grounds that Mumia's jury trial was undermined by faulty sentencing instructions. The Supreme Court waived to rule against Mumia until after it reinstated the death sentence for Ohio neo-Nazi Frank Spisak, which had been overturned on similar grounds of faulty jury instructions. In effect, the high court gave the Third Circuit their marching orders to uphold Mumia's death sentence. Alternatively, the Third Circuit could send the case back to Yohn for a hearing to consider other still-pending claims by Mumia or, less likely, reaffirm its prior decision.

The Supreme Court's actual logic is simple: criminalizing the black people of America's death rows is a testament to the subtle and not so subtle racism of the police, who carry out the police carry out the same sentence for racism as it is for the masses they exploit and oppress. The "justice" system threatens Mumia with the ultimate sentence of state repression and the political repression of the racist capitalist rulers. Noting how his case differed from Spisak's, Mumia aptly told Free Speech Radio News, "The law is the tool of those in power, so how they use it doesn't depend, on the law, it depends on power." The Supreme Court ruling will touch off new rounds of perhaps lengthy legal proceedings. But even if Mumia wins his battle against execution, the "alternative" offered by the courts is a life sentence with no possibility of parole, which, as Mumia noted in one of his prison writings, "is merely slow death".

The Court's linking of the two cases highlights yet again how the fight for Mumia's freedom is inseparable from the struggle to abolish the death penalty. The PDC opposes the death penalty on principle and everywhere—for the guilty as well as for the innocent. We do not accord any state the right to determine who lives and who dies.

Capital punishment is a barbaric relic of ancient codes of justice and, in the US, of chattel slavery. Where in medieval times those who ran afoul of Crown and Church were put to the rack, or burned at the stake, today's representatives of bourgeois "civilisation" debate which combination of lethal drugs to administer to writhing prisoners strapped to death gurneys. In threatening such treatment for Mumia, the courts talk back to when black slaves could be tortured and put to death for hitting a white man in self-defence or for any other act deemed a challenge to the slaveholders. The hugely disproportionate number of black people on America's death rows is a testament to the racist subjugation of the black population, which is fundamental to the maintenance of American capitalism. And while judges in their oak-panelled chambers decree the legal murder of the poor, minorities and working people, the police carry out the same sentence on a far greater scale as they gun down ghetto and barrio youth in the streets.

The death penalty stands at the apex of the machinery of state repression used by the tiny class of capitalist exploiters against the masses they exploit and oppress. The "justice" system threatens Mumia with the ultimate sentence of state repression and the political repression of the racist capitalist rulers. Noting how his case differs from Spisak's, Mumia aptly told Free Speech Radio News, "The law is the tool of those in power, so how they use it doesn't depend on the law, it depends on power." The Supreme Court ruling will touch off new rounds of perhaps lengthy legal proceedings. But even if Mumia wins his battle against execution, the "alternative" offered by the courts is a life sentence with no possibility of parole, which, as Mumia noted in one of his prison writings, "is merely slow death".

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The Fifth Conference of the International Communist League (ICL) in 2007 adopted the position of opposition in principle to Marxists running for executive office in the capitalist state. Such offices include president, mayor, provincial or state governor as well as cabinet member in Britain. As we noted: “Communist deputys can, as oppositionists, serve in the U.S. Congress, parliament and other legislative bodies as revolutionary tribunes of the working class. But assuming executive office or gaining control of a bourgeois legislature or municipal council, whether independently or in coalition, requires taking responsibility for the administration of the machinery of the capitalist state. The ICL had previously held that communists could run for executive offices, provided that we declare in advance that we don’t intend to assume such offices. But in re-examining this question, we concluded that standing for election to executive positions carries the implication that one is ready to accept such responsibility, no matter which platform one makes in advance. For self-proclaimed Marxists to engage in such activity only lends legitimacy to prevailing and reformist conceptions of the state.”


When Marxists run candidates and seek election to bourgeois parliaments it is in order to use them as a platform for furthering the goal of proletarian socialist revolution. In the face of the betrayal of the Social Democratic leaders in Germany at the outset of World War I, Karl Liebknecht used his position in parliament to urge the German proletariat to wage revolutionary class struggle. The ICL notes, “The Bolshevik party carried out revolutionary agitation and propaganda work, even in the reactionist torst Dum. Assuming executive office, however, means becoming responsible for administering the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation of the working class. The London mayor is the boss of the city’s Tube workers, for example, which means carrying out attacks on their wages and conditions. As an example of why communists don’t run for or take executive office, this article will look at the experience of Liverpool City Council from 1983-87, when the deeply Labourite Militant tendency, forrunner of today’s Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal, gained control of the council and administered bourgeois state at the municipal level.

The Communist International and the struggle against reformism

Our opposition to executive offices flows from the Marxist understanding that the state is not neutral but an organ of class rule. At its core the state consists of armed bodies of men and instruments of coercion—the police, the army, prison officers, the courts etc.—committed to the defence of the prevailing property forms. In every struggle of the working class the attitude that one takes towards the state is critical. The fundamental counterposition is between the reformist strategy of taking hold of and administering the bourgeois state apparatus and the revolutionaries’ insistence on the need to smash the existing state and replace it with organs of proletarian rule. Opposition to executive office is a corollary of Lenin’s The State and Revolution and The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kantsky, written in 1917 and 1918 respectively. In effect, these are founding documents of Lenin’s struggle to forge a new, revolutionary international following the collapse of the Second (Socialist) International into social chauvinism at the outbreak of WWI in 1914. With their support for their own “bourgeois” socialists led over definitively to the defence of the capitalist order against the working class. In rescuing the revolutionary heritage of Marxism from the reformist betrayers of the proletariat, Lenin had to reassert the fundamental lesson that Marx and Engels drew from the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which was, as Marx wrote in The Civil War in France, that: “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes”. The experience of the Commune enabled Marx and Engels to codify the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat viz-a-viz the bourgeois state. The question of ministerialism—the participation of Socialists in bourgeois governments—had been the subject of a major dispute in the Marxist movement as early as 1899, over what became known as Millerandism. The French Socialist leader Alexandre Millerand joined the government of Rene Waldeck-Roussea in order to help defuse the deep social crisis that had been raging over the Dreyfus affair. The anti-Semitic witch hunt of this Jewish military officer had polarised the country. Millerand’s entry into the government as minister of commerce was a betrayal which divided French Socialists.

Rosa Luxembourg, the Polish-Jewish revolutionary who played a central role in the struggle against this reformist rot and against ministerialism, wrote: “The entry of a socialist into a bourgeois government is not, as it is thought, a partial conquest of the bourgeois state by the socialists, but a partial conquest of the socialist party by the bourgeois state” (“The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case”, 1899). But the Second International compromised on the key question of socialists entering bourgeois governments. A resolution cooked up by Karl Kautsky in 1900 stated: “The entry of an individual socialist into a bourgeois ministry cannot be regarded as the normal beginning of the acquisition of political power but can only be a temporary and exceptional makeshift in a predicament. Whether in a given case such a predica­ment exists is a question of tactics and not of principle. Hence the Congress shouldn’t decide. But in any case this dangerous experiment can be advantageous only if it is approved by a united party organization and the socialist minister is and remains the mandat-bearer of his party.”

—Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Paris 1900 (International Socialist Congress in Paris 1900) (Berlin: Expidition der Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1900) (our translation)

The ICL stands on the resolutions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International (CI) which began the task of clearing out the Augean stables of Social Democratic betrayal and mainly did a good job of reaffirming Marxism on the question of the state. However, we think that the task was not fully completed and we are not uncritical of the CI during this period. In fact, we believe that communists should not run for executive office is an extension of our criticism of the entry of the German Communist Party (KPD) in October 1923 into the regional governments of Saxony and Thuringia, which we termed “left” Social Democrats. This was a move which helped derail a revolution­ary initiative, Miiller’s “A Reply to the Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern”, Spartacist [English edition] no 56, Spring 2003.

At its Fourth Congress in 1922, the CI incorrectly applied the term “work­ers government” to the bourgeois gov­ernments of Saxony and Thuringia. We understand “workers government” as a popular designation for the dictator­ship of the proletariat that follows the smashing of the bourgeois state. In Germany in 1923 the capitalist state was still intact and KPD participation in these governments reinforced pre­valing parliamentary practices and acted as an obstacle to revolution.

Comintern ambiguity on municipalism

An example of unfinished business of the CI on the capitalist state was seen in “The Theses on the Communist...
Parties and Parliamentism" at the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. The theses make clear that: "The Party's task is to break up the bourgeoisie's state machine and to destroy it, and will it parliamentary institutions, whether republic or constitutional-monarchist."

- Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920 (Pathfinder, 1991)

Thesis 5 unambiguously states what the reformist left often denies, namely that "It is no different with the bourgeoisie's institutions of local government. To counterpose them to the organs of the state is theoretically incorrect. They are in reality organs which relate to the mechanism of the bourgeois state, which must be destroyed by the revolutionary proletariat and replaced by local soviets of workers' deputies."

However another thesis, number 13, which was added as an amendment, contradicts this understanding. It reads: "Should Commissars hold a majority in institutions of local government, they must (a) organize revolutionary opposition against the central bourgeois government; (b) do everything possible to serve the needs of the working class by mass measures, creating or attempting to create an armed workers' militia, and so forth; (c) in every way point out how the bourgeois state blocks truly major changes, always on the basis develop vigorous revolutionary propaganda, never fearing conflict with the state; (d) under certain conditions, replace municipal government with local workers' councils. In other words, all CPC activity in local government must be a part of the general work of undermining the capitalist state."

While trying to draw a line against municipalism, this point is ambiguous enough that it leaves the door open for opportunism. For us revolutionaries, it is important to acknowledge the weakness of the early revolutionary CPC on municipalism. But unlike the CI, the Militant tendency which ran Liverpool Council had long been a hardened reformist organisation.

The myth of "municipal socialism"

A classic example of opportunistic "municipal socialism" is the experience of Poplar Council in the years immediately following WWII. The term "Poplarism" is based on the "Council Revolt" against the central government, which is upheld to this day by reformists of every stripe as an exemplar of local struggle. In "New Liverpool: A City That Dared to Fight" by Peter Taaffe and Tony Mulhearn (Fortress Books, January 1988), Poplar is cited several times as an inspiration for Militant when it ran Liverpool Council.

In 1919 the Labour council of Poplar in East London, led by mayor George Lansbury, began a struggle with the central government, which at that time was a coalition of the Liberals and Tories. Seeking to force rich Londoners to support the central government to assist with poor relief, the Poplar councillors refused to collect rates other than those for the immediate benefit of the impoverished people of Poplar. As the post-WWI economy continued to slump, unemployment levels were high, including among London's dockers. George Lansbury was a left-Labourite, also an SDP founder. His day in office also saw a further step in the militarization of the police.

- "in addition to being a Christian Socialist and a pacifist. Among the Labour councillors elected in Poplar were two Communists, Lansbury's son Edgar and his wife Minnie.

The Poplar Labour councillors acted with considerable courage and were imprisoned for their stubborn campaign on behalf of the poor. However, funding do his duty by calling upon His Majesty's Government to find work or full maintenance for the unemployed of the nation.

In contrast to the later example of the Militant in Liverpool, which did not oppose British troops in Northern Ireland and was much involved in the West German Poplarists' campaign against the Soviet Union, Poplar Council did pass resolutions calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, as well as opposing British imperialist intervention in the Soviet Union. Poplar councillors were among those who, in 1920, stopped the ship the Jolly George from being loaded with munitions bound for Pilsudski's nationalist forces in Poland for use against the Soviet Army. The action by London dockers against the Jolly George was part of the Hands off Russia campaign which had been established for working-class action in defence of the hegemony of the Soviet state against imperialist intervention. (See "Hands off Russia!"

Militant's entire political perspective was to bring in "socialism" through their campaign "for opposing imperialist war."

Support Grant (central government funding) to cities like Liverpool, which was devastated by unemployment with the decline of shipbuilding and the docks. Militant had taken office on the basis of a programme of public spending. They refused to increase the rates (rates were fixed) and put pressure on the government to make up the budget deficit. This is the substance of Militant's much vaunted struggle in Liverpool.

The Militant tendency, led by Ted Grant, was founded in 1946. While falsely portraying itself as Trotskyist, they were in fact an organ of the Marxist Parti Communist to their claim to be winning workers in the Labour Party to Marxism through their "deep entry", it was Militant who took on the political role of the reformist Labour Party, a classic case of the mask becoming the face. Militant's entire political perspective was to bring in "socialism" through gaining a majority in Westminster. The "what we stand for" box in their newspaper Militant shows what this organisational was about. In the 25 May 1983 issue they demand: "Nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies, including the banks and insurance companies which control 60-80 per cent of the economy. This should be done through an Enabling Bill, with compensation based only on proven net asset value."

This is parliamentary criticism — the notion that socialism will come not through workers revolution but via the "moral of all parliamentarians". Militant infamously upheld the line that cops and prison guards — the armed fist of the capitalist state — are "workers in uniform". This reformist programme is upheld by the Socialist Party today. In August 2007, when thousands of prison officers staged a strike over pay, most of the reformist left gave gushing support to the strike. The Socialist Party went further, inviting Prison Officers' Association (POA) leader Brian Caton to address its 'Socialism 2007' event.

Characteristically, the Taaffe/Mulhearn book extols the 1919 police strike and the "union" of police and prison officers, which it says ended in August 1918 to fight for the interests of "workers in uniform". Having described only pages before the savage police assaults against striking railway workers on St George's Plateau in August 1911, Taaffe/Mulhearn declare: "Many workers in Liverpool had indicated that they would come to the side of the police, which showed their proletarian instinct. This was despite many vivid memories of the 1913-14 strike where, they had suffered at the hands of the police in 1911."

In 1921 these cops carried out a brutal assault on unemployed workers occupying the Walker Art Gallery in which, as Taaffe/Mulhearn describe it, "workers blood ran down the steps of the gallery."

This confirms the nature of the police as described by Trotsky in an article about Weimar Germany:

"The fact that the police was originally recruited in large numbers from among Social Democratic workers is absolutely meaningless. Consciousness is determined by environment even in this instance. The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker."

"What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat", January 1932 (The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany)

Labourism and Cold War

Prior to 1983 Liverpool Council was run by the Liberals and Tories, often in coalition. The desperate economic situation however produced a shift and a political vacuum into which Labour, dominated by Militant, was able to...
move. When Militant assumed office in Liverpool the anti-Soviet Cold War campaign of the imperialists was at its peak over the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and the rise of Polish Solidarity in the early 1980s. The Trotskyist Spartacist League stood forthrightly for the military defence of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically upheld same programme in respect to the Spartacist League from a demonstrative, in Afghanistan in 1979 and the rise forthrightly for the military defence of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically upheld programme in respect to the Spartacist League from a demonstrates. Militant howled along with Thatcher and Reagan in their anti-Communist crusade against the Soviet Union. On 14 October 1982 Militant tendency goes attempted to exclude the Spartacist League from a demonstration in Liverpool against youth unemployment. Incensed by our opposition to counterrevolutionary Solidaristic in Poland, after announcing that our campaign of the imperialists was at its peak over the Soviet military intervention to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies, they attempted to tear it down. At the time the Militant tendency was being called the "Labour Party" under the leadership of the Labour Party and the "Communist" Ministry in the Labour Party. Under the impact of Reagan and Thatcher's Cold War drive against the Soviet Union, Tony Blair began the project of seeking to transform the Labour Party from a "bourgeois workers party"—having a mass working-class base, but saddled with a pro-capitalist leadership and programme—into an outright bourgeois party, by severing all links to the trade union movement. This process is unfinished but Labour is now more bound as a reformist party of the working class.

Militant and the miners strike

Peter Taaffe, today's Socialist Party leader who was a leader of the Militant tendency with the late Ted Grant, equates Militant's stewardship of Liverpool Council with the heroic year-long miners strike of 1984-85. The first paragraph of the preface to Taaffe and Mulhearn's book says:

"Since 1979 the conditions and rights of working people appear to have been crushed by the Thatcher juggernaut. In reality, the working class has put up formidable opposition to the Tory government. This reached its height in the classic year-long miners' strike of 1984-85 and in the stand of the Liverpool City Council between 1983-7."

Ludicrously placing the most significant class struggle in Britain since the 1926 General Strike on the same plane as Militant's pleading with Thatcher for more money for Liverpool shows Taaffe's miserable parliamentary cretinism. Although the book is 500 pages long there are only a few passing references to the miners strike. Thatcher deployed the full weight of the capitalist state—thousands of riot cops, MI5 spies, court sequestrators etc.—against the NUM, which was dubbed the "enemy within". As Taaffe/Mulhearn acknowledge: "the miners' strike had to be 'seen off' and this was not to take place until March 1985". Thus, in July 1984, four months into the miners strike, Thatcher's minister Patrick Jenkin made a deal with the Militant-led council whereby the Tory government in Westminster would give Liverpool Council £30 million in exchange for a rates rise of 17 per cent. In his book Inside left: the story so far, published in 1988, former Militant deputy council leader Derek Hatton recounts being told by Tony MP Teddy Taylor that "we had to tell Patrick to give you the money. At this stage we want Scargill. He's our priority. But we'll come for you later." We called for spreading the miners strike to other strategic industries, particularly the railways and the docks, which would have shut down the country. This would have immediately raised the question of state power, of which class shall rule. Taaffe/Mulhearn say that: "Like other councils, Liverpool City Council was heavily involved in support for the miners" and cite the facilities provided by the council for collecting cash to buy food which was delivered to the mining areas by the "lorry-load". But Militant's perspective was above all to get a Labour government elected. The Labour Party at that time was led by Neil Kinnock, who was despised by militant miners, especially for his denunciations of the strikers as "violent" while they were under mass police assault. Kinnock第一节 the miners not least with his call for a strike-breaking call, stating: "the miners have been that while accepting there is discrimination, the problems of the black community are part of the overall struggle. It is a class problem, and must be solved within that wide framework." He continues, "To do otherwise is to alienate many white working-class people from identifying with the struggle."

Militant's fear of "alienating white working-class people" is an expression of the idea that the actions of a 'determined minority' can bulwark other workers to come out on strike without discussion and a democratic vote is absolutely false.

Militant/Socialist Party: Labour xist social chauvinism

As a city, Liverpool was built on the slave trade. In all its dreams, Militant conducted their business is decorated with stone representations of slavery, city streets are named after those who got very rich in the trafficking of black human flesh, including numerous mayors of the city such as Foster Cunliffe, Joseph Bird and George Campbell.

In 1981, rampant police brutality against minority youth sparked riots in Toxteth. As we wrote in Workers' Hammer no 109 (September 1980):

"Unequal employment in the heavily black Toxteth area can reach up to 80 per cent. In some areas, according to another report in the Independent (15 October 1988) unemployment among black youth is as high as 90 per cent. 'Nowhere else in Britain are blacks so exposed to threats, taunts, and abuse, than in the heart of an area of the city' (Guardian, 19 July).

A Marxist revolutionary should strive to be, in Lenin's words, "not a trade union secretary but a tribune of the people". In other words, we fight against all manifestations of oppression in capitalist society and seek to lead the multiethnic working class in a struggle against racism. In all its dreams, Militant fought against white supremacy, against women's oppression, against the oppression of homosexuals etc. The Militant is a "tribune of the people".

A furious row developed when a Liverpool Central Labour Party member from London, was appointed as Principal Race Relations Advisor to the Liverpool Council. Taaffe/Mulhearn claim:

"Two entirely different approaches, reflecting diamentically opposed class forces, clashed on the issue of his appointment as Principal Race Relations Officer to the Liverpool City Council. On the one side stood the class conscious approach of the labour movement. On the other side stood the relations industry, feeling threatened to the very marrow of their being by the appointment of just one Marxist to such a potentially important position.""
of Militant’s pandering to backward consciousness, including racism. Their indifference to racist oppression is of a piece with their refusal to call for British troops out of Northern Ireland and their refusal to defend the Catholic population against national oppression at the hands of the British imperialists and the Orange state. This cross Labourite social chauvinism is exemplified by an article in the 6 January 1984 Militant titled “Northern Ireland: Labour must combat sectarianism.” Militant says, “the Labour Party in Britain can and must play a significant part in helping Northern Irish workers come together in common struggle for socialists.” This is the same pro-imperialist Labour Party which led the cheering in Parliament at the execution of James Connolly; which sent British troops into Northern Ireland in 1969 and which introduced the first draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974. Of course Militant’s leaders are past masters at disguising their Labourite opportunism in the language of pseudo-Marxism, claiming that they’re fighting for “working-class unity.”

Once the Thatcher government had defeated the miners—who were betrayed by the misleaders of the working class—Thatcher turned her attention to Liverpool. The city councillors were made personally liable for the refusal to set a rate. A total of 47 councillors were surcharged, while the council tried to raise money from the Swiss banks. But in the meantime, with the money running out in a matter of weeks, Militant famously issued redundancy notices to the council workers. As described by Taaffe/Mulhearn:

“The Labour group decided on the tactic of issuing 90-day redundancy notices to the 30,000 strong workforce to gain that period as a breathing space in order to build the campaign. It was absurd to suggest, as the party and the media claimed, that the national trade-union leaders subsequently did, that 30,000 workers were to be sacked.”

They conclude, however, that “the issuing of ‘redundancy notices’ turned out to be a major tactical error.” Derek Hatton, in Inside Left, unwittingly captures the miserable spectacle of self-proclaimed “Marxists” administering capitalism against the workers:

“We argued, that by issuing redundancy notices we could also hammer home the sharp reality of our argument: that unless more money was available to Liverpool from the central funds then jobs really were on the line. There was never ever any intention to implement a single one of those 31,000 redundancy notices.”

Meanwhile, the US military still rains death on Iraq and Afghanistan, inmates from America’s vast prison complex to Gitmo, where the military’s arrogant and Guantánamo Bay dungeons continue to be brutalised and tortured, and bankers get billion-dollar bailouts while workers lose their jobs and homes.

The fight to free Mumia, as with all struggles against social oppression and deprivation, can go forward based only on a clear understanding of the class forces involved. Make no mistake: In baying for Mumia’s blood, the forces of bourgeois “law and order” are sending a message to all who would fight against exploitation, oppression and imperialist war that they, too, are in the sights of the state. The real fight for Mumia’s freedom must be based on a class-struggle opposition to the capitalist rulers, who have entombed this innocent man for more than half his life. Free Mumia now! ■

Mumia (Continued from page 5)

Counterposed to this class-struggle strategy is the policy of many organisations - the Socialist Party, the Workers World Party, the Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and others — which long centred their protests on the demand for a new, fair trial for Mumia. With the judicial appeals in which they put their faith nearly exhausted, their plea that the capitalist state deliver justice now comes in the form of petitions to Attorney General Eric Holder to conduct a civil rights investigation into Mumia’s frame-up trial and to President Barack Obama to “speak out against the death penalty for Mumia Abu-Jamal.”

These hat-in-hand appeals to America’s top cop and imperialist Commander-in-Chief are a savage indictment of the liberal belief in the “democracy” of capitalist class rule. Holder’s Justice Department recently threw leftist attorney Lynne Stewart in prison and threatened to extend her sentence by 28 more years for staunchly defending her client, who was accused of terrorist activities. Obama openly announced his support for the death penalty in his run for the White House, including in an interview with right-wing journalist Michael Smerconish, one of the voices calling loudest for Mumia’s execution.

After eight years of the despised Bush regime, Obama took office to give a facelift to blood-soaked US imperialism. Reinforcing illusions that Obama represents “change”, the reformist left tactically allowed the state to brazenly violate the principles of proletarian independence and an attack on the labour movement’s strength. Inviting the state into the internal affairs of the labour movement is to promote illusions in bourgeois democracy by portraying the state as “neutral” between classes. That is the very essence of Militant’sLabourite reformism.

What was the result of Militant’s proud record in Liverpool? They boast that the Labour vote in 1983 was higher in Liverpool than the national average and much higher than it had been in 1983. In other words, if only that swing had been reflected nationally we would have had... a Kinnock-led Labour government! That’s what we get with “socialists” holding executive office and administering the capitalist state. In its own way it’s a powerful argument for why you need a workers revolution. ■
Labour... (Continued from page 1)

Unions: defend immigrants!

Responsibility for the racist climate that has bolstered the fascists rests on both Labour governments of the last 13 years. Under Labour, the imperialist occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the "war on terror" at home elevated anti-Muslim racism to unprecedented levels. Liberal journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in her Independent column (8 March) bitterly complains that the British establishment "has surpassed its previous disgraceful record", treating Muslims as "contemptible creatures, devalued humans". The indifference of Gordon Brown (and Tony Blair) to the countless Iraqis killed and indiscriminately bombed, Alibhai-Brown says, only confirms that "native Iraqis are grains of sand to those who executed the imperial war". Even while the press is filled with revelations showing that "terror suspects" are routinely tortured abroad with the connivance of the Home Office, Muslim youth in Britain are being served with serious prison sentences for protesting against the murderous Israeli attack on Gaza last year (see article, page three).

Labour removed some of the most basic rights from asylum seekers, replacing meagre welfare benefits with food vouchers. Among other things, those incarcerated in detention centres are denied access to healthcare; other asylum seekers have been "dispersed" to sink estates such as Glasgow's Red Road flats where in early March a Russian family—Serge Serykh, his wife Tatiana and her son—tragically threw themselves to their deaths from a tower block, having been refused leave to remain in Britain. This tragedy is not unusual, as Guardian columnist Deborah Orr points out, noting "the fact that the three had to chuck down a large wardrobe before they jumped, to break the anti-suicide netting that had been installed, is an indication that they were not the only people in the vicinity who were coerced to be in danger of finding their lives intolerable". "Who is really to blame for the Glasgow suicides?" (Guardian, 11 March).

Britain's "flexible labour market" is heavily dependent on immigrant workers who work for pitiful wages in a climate of racist hostility. The sub-human conditions endured by workers in the meat processing industry—which is worth hundreds of millions of pounds and employs almost 90,000 people—was the subject of a report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. A Guardian article titled "I'm not a slave, I just can't speak English"—life in the meat industry, summarises the condition of these workers, many of whom are immigrants, predominantly from Eastern Europe, saying:

"Pregnant women being forced to stand for long hours in factory production lines without breaks, or perform heavy lifting under threat of the sack; next factory workers having frozen hamburgers "like stones" thrown at them by line managers; women with heavy periods being refused toilet breaks so that they bleed on their clothes on the production lines; workers with bladder problems refused breaks so that they urinated on themselves, workers exposed to verbal and physical abuse." — Guardian, 13 March

The unions must organise immigrant workers and demand equal pay at the highest going rate for all work, no matter who does it! Down with reactionary strikes against foreign workers!

No deportations! Full citizenship rights for immigrants!

Under the slogan of Karl Marx: "Workers of all countries unite!" immigrant workers from Eastern Europe must become a bridge to proletarian international organisation to the European Union, a bosses' conglomerate designed to bludgeon the multiethnic working classes of all Europe.

No vote to Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition!

Following a long period when it seemed likely that Labour would lose Labour—the unions remain the biggest source of funds for the party. Moreover, these consummate Labourites assert that: "To sit in a caucust, staff room or office and say there's no difference between the Tories and Labour cuts you off from some of the best people around you. You will look like you are some sort on the fringe." Heaven forbid. Better to vote for the party of imperialist occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the party which lavished benefits on the City bankers and which is running on its willingness to shove massive public spending cuts down the throats of working people. The SWP is also supporting the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (Tusc). One doesn't have to be a Marxist to be repulsed by Tusc, which upholds the chauvinist strikes against foreign workers and counts among its luminaries prison officers' leader, Brian Cant. Tusc is the successor to the No2EU coalition formed by the Socialist Party and RMT rail union leader Bob Crow for the European Parliament elections last year. We said "No Vote to No2EU", whose campaign consisted of chauvinist protectionism. As a 22 May 2009 article on BBC News online put it: "No2EU was born out of the British jobs for British workers' protests at the Lindsay oil refinery and its aim is to provide working class voters and trade union members with a left wing alternative to the British National Party". Today Tusc's list of candidates includes Keith Gibson of the Socialist Party, who praised "the fascists at Lindsay. Moreover the Socialist Party and Bob Crow appear to decide who is eligible to join Tusc according to whether or not they supported the Lindsay strikes and/or the No2EU coalition. An article by the Socialist Party informs us that the SWP's admission to Tusc was "not automatic" and explains:

"Bob Crow, reflecting the response of RMT militants at last year's Lindsey strike unfolded, immediately and rightly condemned those "misrepresenting the strikers as xenophobes—a pash word for racist" (in a letter to The Guardian, 6 February 2009). The SWP, on the other hand, criticised the strike as 'nationalist'. "The SWP took a similar stance towards No2EU, the electoral body which was supported not just by the union tops but a big majority of RMT activists. These and other political mistakes by the SWP will not make winning support for TUSC easier inside the RMT, and other unions too."

The SWP tried to have it both ways on the Lindsey strike, claiming to oppose the slogan of "British jobs for British workers" while petitioning in the unions for support to the demands of the strike committee, which included a version of local jobs for local workers.

The Tusc leadership allowed the SWP to join, because workers "would naturally want to see the widest possible unity", but both the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and Workers Power, who applied to stand candidates under the Tusc umbrella, were turned down. As a condition of admission both groups were asked to provide membership-figures, details of any members they have on union national executive committees who would support Tusc and a statement of "what recommendations did your organisation give, if any, on how to vote in the 2009 European elections?" (letter from Tusc to CPGB, 3 February, published in Weekly Worker, 11 February). The CPGB answered that they did not call for a vote to No2EU, because it wasn't for "working class unity on a European level", so they voted Labour! The CPGB will of course vote for Tusc anyway, as well as for "Labour candidates who are prepared to call for an unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all British troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, and who pledge to oppose all cuts in public services and benefits" (Weekly Worker, 11 February).

In a recent split, the SWP lost three senior cadre—Chris Nineham, John...
Deformed workers states against imperialist attack. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and to the Labourist bureaucracies that run these troops to Korea. See “The Bankruptcy of ‘New Class’ Theories” (Spartacist no 55 Spring 1999). The SWP actually played its small part in helping to create today’s defence of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, and for workers political revolution to challenge the Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. This is the program we apply today to the remaining deformed workers states — China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

Counterrevolution in the Soviet Union has led to a profound retrogression in proletarian consciousness. Although it is uneven throughout the world, today even the most politically conscious workers in the capitalist countries by and large do not identify their struggles with the goal of socialism. We say that the struggle today is a crusade to swim against the stream of today’s reactionary climate and to forge the nucleus of a revolutionarily vanguard party. As Trotsky noted in his article “Stalinism and Bolshevism” (1937):

“Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions. On one hand the false vanguards, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come. On the other the reformist centrist, and diletante, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the activity of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search of a ‘New Word’."

The British SWP’s “socialism” only ever amounted to pressuring the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy who are wedded to British imperialism and to parliament. The old Labour Party — born out of a unique situation in which Britain’s imperial proletariat was a majority of the population. Thus Labour had a sufficiently large working-class vote to get elected to parliament as a majority government. This is the reason for Britain’s relative economic decline and also a product of the de-industrialisation of the 1970s and 80s. The support for Margaret Thatcher’s Tory governments and by New Labour since 1997, the majority of them by the working class. Under Tony Blair in the 1990s the Labour Party began to seve its historic links to the trade union movement (while trying to keep the unions’ financial contributions to the party) and to cast around for support of other social layers, particularly those who had swung to the Tories in the 1980s.

It was the political bankruptcy of old Labour that led to the rise of New Labour, which now stands discredited among workers after a prolonged period at the helm of a country in an economic mess. New Labour is a product of decades of attacks — including by Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s — on working people to break the power of the unions in an effort to improve the competitiveness of British capitalism. Labour was replaced by the Conservative Party, in 1979 which prepared a showdown with the miners, culminating in the heroic year-long strike of 1984-85. Defeat in that battle was far from inevitable and was the result of the treachery of the Labourite leaders of the miners’ strike who supported the right wing of the miners in their conflict with the docks who refused to organise solidarity with the miners. The difficulties under which the British workers struggle today — including the anti-union laws — are the legacy of the defeat of that struggle and the fact that the Labourite leaders of the miners refused to rock the boat with class struggle.

The British capitalist order is based on the dominance of the City of London and the middle-class English Home Counties over the former industrial heartlands of the north of England as well as the national oppression of Scotland and Wales. We oppose the anti-institution laws — are the legacy of the destruction of the miners’ strike which fought to overthrow Westminster rule and replace it with workers government. Abolish the monarchy, the established churches and the House of Lords! British troops out of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan! For an Irish workers republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Island!
WORKERS HAMMER

Victory to the BA strike!

Shut down Heathrow Airport!

MARCH 31—As we go to press, the second in a series of strikes by cabin crews at British Airways (BA)—their first in 13 years—has resulted in a four-day stoppage beginning on 20 March, followed by a four-day stoppage a week later, having disrupted BA operations at London's Heathrow Airport, one of the busiest in the world. Further strikes are likely to be called for after 14 April.

The BA strikes are among a series of actions by workers in the European airline industry. In Germany, the Lufthansa union plans to strike for four days from 13 April while in France a strike by air traffic controllers in February disrupted flights from the two main Paris airports. Meanwhile as the worldwide economic recession bites, workers in Greece, who face savage assaults on their wages, benefits and working conditions, have mobilised for several months in the past month against government austerity plans. In Britain, the rail union RMT has announced a four-day strike from 6 April, which will be the first national rail stoppage since 1994.

These & by cabin crew members of the Unite union has certainly had an impact on BA, which is reported to have lost £7 million a day during the first strike. At the same time there has been scabbing. BA has been operating a flight which flew from London's Gatwick and City airports as well as a number of flights from Heathrow, through a combination of flying aircraft leased from other airlines and other strikebreaking operations. Strikes have faced intimidation and victimisation by BA chief executive Willie Walsh, who has stripped them of concessionary fares, which many use in order to travel to work. He has also vindictively docked the equivalent of twelve days' pay for those rostered for long-haul flights during the walkout. All BA flights must be grounded. Urgently needed is to shut down Heathrow Airport through class solidarity from the other Unite members at Heathrow—baggage handlers, check-in staff and mechanics—as well as effective picket lines that no one crosses. As our March leaflet, reprinted below, stressed: "To defeat BA's scabbing, solidarity strikes by all airport workers, in defiance of the anti-union laws, are necessary."

A successful strike by cabin crews at Heathrow Airport is necessary in order to defeat British Airways (BA) boss Willie Walsh's union-busting. Twelve thousand BA workers, members of the BASSA division of the Unite union, are set to strike for three days of strike action from 20 March and another four from the 27th. Walsh would like to gut BA of unions altogether, which means all workers have an interest in supporting the BA strike. What's posed is the very existence of unions at Heathrow Airport, the largest remaining bastion of unionised workers in the country.

The airline industry is reeling from the impact of the current recession. Figures for 2009 internationally show the largest decline in passenger traffic since World War II, net losses estimated at $9.4 billion and some 32 airlines going bankrupt since 1994. Meanwhile as the past month has shown an extra £37 million a year to cover a gaping hole in the pension fund!

Bleatings of David Cameron's Tories aside, the fact that Unite bankrolls the official anti-union British Airline Pilots Association (BAPA) scandalously repudiated the strike as "unlawful" and left the sacked cabin crews by the roadside shows that Walsh is backed by a party that is fully complicit in the union-busting of BA workers, who are mainly Asian women, out to dry. Today the Unite leadership is bending over backwards to capitulate to BA, volunteering their own package of cuts and begging Walsh to put his last offer back on the table. They have even agreed to take out an extra £37 million a year to make Walsh & Co's "deplorable" deal palatable. But only an invertebrate Labourite reformist would whine, as Socialist Worker (20 March) did, that Brown "should be attacking BA chief executive Willie Walsh". Fat chance.

While Old Labour governments routinely sided with the bosses against striking workers, New Labour prides itself on its loyalty to the bankers and bosses and its betrayal of the unions. New Labour set out to sew the party's links to the trade unions, which would transform it from a reformist party (as one with a working-class base but a pro-capitalist programme) into an outright bourgeois party like the US Democratic Party. This process remains incomplete because the party is dependent on union funds, but Labour is moribund as a reformist party.

Behind the condemnation of the strikes by Adonis and Brown stands the state, which has at its disposal a welter of anti-union laws and the courts and cops to enforce them. BA workers have to fight alone. They have the power to halt the industry, hit the bosses in the bottom line. But what is needed to unleash this power is a political battle against the sell-out Unite leadership.

For the members of the Unite union it must surely rankle that their dues have been funding the Labour Party to the tune of £1 million in the past four years, which amounts to "feeding the continued on page 11