



Against the Budget cut plans, prepare for class war!

The unions must prepare to fight back, and prepare to fight in defence of those workers, in the public sector, targeted first by the government. Big public meetings should be organised all over the country to explain the significance of the Lib-Tory assault.

The Lib-Tory plan is a gradual one. The cuts will escalate from year to year, reaching a peak only in 2015. We do not and cannot know in advance how soon we will reach the point where those cuts trigger mass resistance. But we know that the quicker that happens, the better; and the energy and effort of activists now will make a difference.

Politically, the trade unions need to break with the Blair-Brown gang of ex-ministers. These people - all of them without exception - have dirty hands. Nobody should have any confidence in them.

All the candidates for Labour leader, save Diane Abbott, were in the Blair-Brown governments. They were complicit in everything Blair and Brown did. They supported the Iraq war. They actively backed Blair and Brown when they reduced the Labour Party to a more or less empty shell. None of them raised even a squeak of protest about New Labour keeping the Tory anti-union laws - the laws on which the Lib-Tory government may now erect further restrictions of trade unionism.

The unions should move now to restore or create the structures that will make the Labour Party a living party of rank and file activists once again. In the review of Labour Party structure opening this October, this must mean, above all, winning the right for Labour Party conference to debate democratically and decide Labour policy. The rank and file of unions and the Labour Party alike must demand that.

Labour-controlled councils will be tasked with implementing many of the Tory-Liberal cuts. They should refuse to do that. The unions should insist that they refuse.

The labour movement is now faced with the need to fight against the Tory-Lib-Dem government. What should it fight for?

The labour movement needs to set itself the task of creating, not a new New Labour government, but a workers' government! A government that, minimally at least, serves the working people as this government is serving, and the New Labour government served, the bourgeoisie.

A government that confronts the capitalists

and the capitalist system, and that aims to replace capitalism with a working-class social and economic system.

We are a long way from that? Indeed. Right now it is a matter of educational work in the labour movement for these aims.

It falls to the Marxist left to educate a new layer of working-class socialists in the fire of the class struggle that may now ignite.

The Marxist left itself is in a bad condition for doing that. It is split up into sects. Much of the would-be Marxist left is seriously disoriented.

Yet turnings in the road such as that made at the general election can create the conditions for political regroupment. Dialogue on the present situation, and on prospects and perspectives for the class struggle, is now both possible and necessary, on the left and the would-be left.

Vote Abbott, but organise the left on clear policies

Socialists in the Labour Party and the affiliated trade unions should vote for Diane Abbott in the Labour leadership election, while saying that she cannot be trusted and that the leader-election system should be changed to allow a wider choice.

Over the last 20-odd years Abbott has generally voted and spoken against the Iraq invasion and for trade union rights, for migrant rights, for expanded council housing, for scrapping British nuclear weapons, for fighting cuts, against privatisation, for free higher education, and for civil liberties.

The bigger the vote for Abbott, the greater the boost to the will and confidence of the trade unionists and Labour Party members who are for those things.

The other candidates have been Cabinet ministers and backroom boys for Blair and Brown. They now say they want to move on from New Labour, but with almost no specifics except the foul talk by Burnham and Balls on immigration.

Abbott is conducting her campaign by playing down her "leftism", and being vague even when she does say leftist things.

Her background includes not only her votes in Parliament, but a poor record on the misdeeds of Labour councils in her own patch in Hackney, and a marked lack of the energy in supporting workers' struggles, and in promoting rank-and-file campaigns in the labour movement, that John McDonnell has shown.

She herself has said that her decision to send her son to a private school was "indefensible". By

saying that, she tells us that under pressure she would take "indefensible" stances again.

She has refused to support the campaign, backed by many Labour MPs, against the privatisation of the East London line of the Underground.

Voting Abbott is nevertheless the way that trade-union and Labour Party members can and will, in the leadership ballot, express their hostility to the New Labour line and their identification with the trade unionists and Labour Party members who opposed Blair and Brown in government from the left.

Inside the labour movement, in union elections for example, often we can't get a candidate whom we can support whole-heartedly. We generally vote for left candidates, even inadequate ones, against the standard-issue right, where that is the choice.

We do it because we are concerned for the movement as a whole, and concerned for boosting the will and confidence of the broader left.

Doing it makes us better-placed to get a hearing for our criticisms and our ideas than would standing aside with a declaration that we see no difference between the former Cabinet ministers and someone who often voted against the New Labour government on big issues.

Abbott's campaign is not likely to be run in the way John McDonnell would have run a campaign, building a left-wing network in the labour movement.

But the hustings and the debates in union and Labour meetings can be used by socialists to do that, so long as we both show our solidarity with the broader left against the ex-Cabinet candidates, and advance our own ideas, giving bite and specifics to the general leftish talk about Labour Party democracy, union rights, migrant rights, fighting cuts, etc. which comes from Abbott.

A "plague on all houses" position would only function as a back-handed way of easing support to Ed Balls or Ed Miliband, whichever manages to get the "respectable left candidate" slot with trade union leaders. CWU, for example, is formally committed to back only candidates who support the main lines of CWU policy. That mandates it to recommend Abbott. If left-wingers just sit on their hands - "it's all rubbish, no choice" - they will not get any union to recommend spoiled ballots, but they may ease the way for top officials to get unions to back the ex-Cabinet candidate making the most plausible vague promises.

Unite workers across Europe!

The cuts programme is Europe-wide. Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Greece are all making big cuts in social provision.

This is a social and political choice by the ruling classes. In the tumult of 2008, many mainstream writers said that neo-liberalism was dead, and capitalist governments would have to seek a new programme, possibly conceding more social provision.

Yet the EU governments are gambling on a push

for a strongly neo-liberal way forward from the crisis.

That means gearing government policy to making the eurozone an attractive site for footloose global capital to perch in:

- * Having frantic financial markets, seamlessly integrated into global financial flows, central to the economy;

- * Open borders for capital and commodities (not necessarily people);

- * Low taxes on the rich and corporations;

- * Privatisation;

- * Union-bashing.

Although state governments in the USA (all bar Vermont tied by balanced-budget laws) are pushing through big cuts, the US federal government is still unapologetic about continuing large deficit spending, and so is the Japanese government. That difference is not really about a break with neo-liberalism, but the different ways that the USA and Japan are inserted into the global economy.

The Europe-wide cuts drive calls for a cross-European workers' fightback. The top-level European Trade Union Confederation has called a Europe-wide day of action on the theme "no cuts, more growth" - for 29 September! More urgency is needed.

The first demand should be for the cancellation of the crippling debts owed by many European governments to European banks, and the taking over of all the big banks and financial institutions across Europe, to be run as an integrated, publicly-owned, democratically-controlled banking, pension, and mortgage service.

The second should be for social guarantees across Europe - minimum wages, job protection, welfare benefits, pensions - levelled up to the best current standards, and funded on a European level.

The third, a Europe-wide emergency programme of public works to tackle unemployment and pauperisation. Workers' control of the big multinationals, to steer production toward need and to guarantee every worker the right to a decent job.

Those demands require a campaign for a democratic republican United States of Europe. The existing bureaucratic structures should be replaced by a sovereign elected European Parliament with full control over all EU affairs.

The European Union (carbon) Emissions Trading Scheme should be replaced by a programme to reconvert energy-generation, industry, transport, and city planning, under workers' control, on sustainable lines.

Socialists and trade unionists in Britain should make the best and closest links they can for this battle with our comrades across Europe.

24 June 2010

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