

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



Volume 3 No 186 2 December 2010 30p/80p

For a Workers' Government!

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Financial gangsters have Ireland by the throat

BY SEAN MATGAMNA

We are so used to taking the operations of bankers and speculators for granted, we are so used to taking markets and their needs as a matter of fact, that we are in danger of not grasping the startling nature of what is happening in Ireland.

The people of “independent Ireland” are now in the hands of gangsters who are as merciless as they are greedy and unscrupulous — financial and political gangsters.

“Independent Ireland” is discovering that, though it is politically independent of Britain, its old overlord, in economic affairs it is not at all independent. It is entirely in the hands of international financiers.

It has had to formally surrender control of its economic affairs for the next three years to the European Union. To stave off the bankruptcy of the state, the Irish government had to borrow an enormous sum, £72 billion. To get the money, the government has had to agree to tremendous cuts and tax rises, which will siphon an additional £3900 a year out of the average Irish family’s income.

Those measures will be an additional dead weight on economic activity, pushing the country further into recession. Already 14% of Irish workers are unemployed — twice the rate of Britain. As a result of the EU-enforced cuts, unemployment is expected to rise a lot further.

That will undercut the possibility of the government being able to raise enough revenue from the economy to pay back its debts on schedule. Experts now say it is only a matter of when — not if — the Irish state will default on its

debts.

That prospect leads the international money-lending speculators to demand a very high interest rate for money they lend to the Irish state — money on which it must depend to help it through the crisis. It is a vicious circle.

But the international bankers must have their pounds, and tons, of the Irish people’s flesh. Merciless gangsters! And, probably, stupid gangsters, who are disabling the Irish economy by their haste and greed.

It isn’t just the international bankers and the EU governments that act as their instruments. It is Irish bankers and Irish politicians.

Just as, long ago, the Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland at the invitation of a provincial king, Dermot McMurragh, so Ireland now has been put in the hands of the international financial gangsters by Irish financial gangsters, and the Irish political gangsters who serve them.

It was Irish banks that created Ireland’s financial crisis, in the first place the Anglo-Irish Bank, whose greed for profit turned them into wildly irresponsible lenders of money to Irish property developers and borrowers of money on the international markets.

It was Irish politicians, of the Fianna Fail/ Green coalition government, who tied the fate of the whole economy to that of their friends, the banking profiteers. In September 2008, to save the Anglo-Irish Banks from bankruptcy and the other Irish banks from possibly being pulled down with it, the Dublin government took the unprecedented step — something done by no other government — of guaranteeing all the banks’ depositors and debtors.

It put the state’s power of money-raising

at the service of the banks. It took on a commitment which, it is increasingly clear, the state can’t honour. The threatened collapse of a bank, or some banks, is now accompanied by the threatened, and increasingly probable, financial collapse of the Irish state.

The Dublin government is a coalition whose majority in Parliament was, until this week, three, two of them independent TDs. This government, within the next fortnight, has to push through the budget on which the EU bail-out loan depends.

No savagely severe EU-dictated budget, no bailout money!

Instead of calling a general election before such a tremendous set of financial decisions is taken, the government has promised an election in January — after the budget. This piece of political gangsterism against the people of Ireland is necessary, they know, to get the budget through.

Except that they may not be able to get it through anyway.

The opposition parties will not sup-

Dublin demonstration 27 November

port the Fianna Fail budget. Fianna Fail, the constitutional nationalist party, has just lost a by-election in one of its old strongholds, Donegal. They faced a meltdown of votes.

They may meet the same fate in a general election. Fianna Fail’s poll support is down to 17%, the lowest in its near-80 year history.

No less significant than Fianna Fail’s loss is who beat them — Pearse Doherty of Sinn Fein. Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, is standing in County Louth in the upcoming general election. Sinn Fein is taking a hard economic-nationalist line that is nine-tenths mere demagoguery.

But Sinn Fein looks like it will be the immediate gainer from the tremendous anger in Ireland on the part of a people being bled and fleeced by a conglomerate of Irish and international financiers and politicians.

The Labour Party, loosely linked to the unions, will stand in the general election as the junior partner in a projected coalition headed by the second main bourgeois party, Fine Gael.

Will the crisis break up the eurozone?

BY MARTIN THOMAS

Why isn’t the EU/ IMF rescue plan for Ireland working?

The plan is not to rescue Ireland, but to rescue the banks (German, French, British, etc.) which lent money to Irish banks.

On condition of harsh cuts, the EU and the IMF provided the Irish government with long-ish-term loans to “increase confidence”, and to cut short the process of Irish banks relying on spiralling amounts of short-term credit from the European Central Bank.

But the plan seems not to be working even for the banks.

“The markets” — that is, international financiers — think that, as the *Financial Times* puts it, “it is hard to see how Ireland can repay all the debt it has now taken on”.

Thus the market price of Irish government IOUs (bonds) continues to plummet, or (the same thing viewed from another angle) the interest-rate which financiers demand for those bonds rises.

The social cuts may be bad, but surely they’ll free up enough resources for the Irish government to make its debt payments?

The social cuts have the perverse effect of pushing unemployment higher, i.e. of reducing the amount of new value produced by Irish labour.

So the Irish government can make huge social cuts and despite that, indeed partly because of that, end up with less

income to meet its debt payments. The Irish people get the cuts and the default that the cuts are supposed to avoid.

But the cuts can reorient the economy towards exports, which will bring new income?

Exports to where? If all the big capitalist economies are cutting back social spending and domestic demand, who will import all those exports?

Why Ireland?

Over the last decade, since the introduction of the euro, states like Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Italy, and banks within them, have been able to get credit more cheaply.

When they were borrowing in global financial markets in punts, drachma, escudos, and so on, then they had to offer interest rates which offset the risk, for international financiers, that at pay-back time the punts, drachma, or escudos would be worth less relative to major currencies.

In euros, they could borrow at more or less the same rates as the German government and German banks.

This easy credit helped fuel a speculative property boom in Ireland, and also in Spain.

Meanwhile, German capitalists used the discipline of the European Central Bank to help them keep labour costs in Germany down. German exporters more and more out-competed the capitalists of the poorer eurozone countries. Those countries ran big trade deficits, “bal-

anced” by big inflows of credit.

Now credit has dried up.

Poorer non-eurozone countries have “adjusted” to the crisis by having their currency lose value in relation to the euro and the dollar. Eurozone countries can’t “adjust” that way.

Ireland has a special problem in that its banks expanded their borrowing out of all proportion, in a way which banks in Greece, Portugal, etc. didn’t do. But the structural problems with relations between richer and poorer countries in the eurozone are general. Which is why the Irish crisis is triggering trouble in “the markets” for Portugal, Spain, Italy (and Greece, too).

The answer is to curb the financial markets?

Capitalism with production and distribution chains spread across the world needs fast-flowing and “deep” global financial markets — unless it can organise itself to have a single world money (and we see now the difficulties of having international money even for a relatively compact unit like the eurozone).

Capitalist corporations borrowing funds in one currency, paying suppliers’ bills in several others, and getting revenue in yet others, will suffer catastrophic losses unless they can trade and “hedge” between currencies slickly. On the basis of that need a huge financial superstructure arises. It is organic to modern capitalism, not an easily-curbed add-on.

The answer is: to fight capitalism, to

fight for workers’ governments which control finance in their countries and link up internationally to control the global production chains.

What will happen now?

The *Financial Times* says flatly: “An Irish default [announcement that it can’t meet debt payments] is surely now only a question of when, not if”.

Martin Wolf, in the *Financial Times*, continues: “The question now is not whether the eurozone can avoid a wave of fiscal-cum-financial crises. The question is whether the [eurozone] will survive”.

Quitting the euro would hurt Ireland, or Greece, or Portugal, or Spain. The restored punt, drachma, escudo, or peso would initially lose value fast against the euro, and debts would still have to be repaid in euros. But that would also enable those countries to cut their costs (as measured in euros) and win more export income. A point may come when they see no other option.

That could lead to a shrinking of the eurozone, to a smaller number of stronger economies, or to its complete collapse and a return to national currencies. I don’t know which is more likely.

A collapse of the eurozone would not mean the break-up of the European Union, but it would severely damage it and slow down its efforts to integrate capitalism on a continental scale.

ANTI-CUTS

Why we need student-worker unity

In the last weeks students, including many school students, have organised strikes, walk-outs, sit-downs, occupations and mass demonstrations. These protests, the like of which we haven't seen for many years, have been an inspiration to all of us.

The students' energy and innovation could, if the movement goes on for any length of time, help the labour movement to rediscover tactics and forms of struggle we once knew but have for the most part long since forgotten.

In the course of student struggles socialists often raise the slogan "students and workers unite!" But why do we say that?

In the first place it is because, while student struggles may invigorate, inspire, catalyse, in some instances even win significant reforms, they cannot fundamentally challenge the basis on which our society is organised. Only a struggle based in the essential site of capitalist exploitation — the workplace — can do that.

Universities and school are, of course, workplaces for hundreds of workers, and worker-student unity in education has always been a priority for socialists active in the student movement.

What does working-student unity mean practically? Crucially, what does it mean practically in a context in which students are much more prepared to take the kind of direct action we need than trade unions?

The TUC has called a national demonstration against cuts. But it's not until March 2011. In such a context, declaring the need for student-worker unity can sound like an instruction to student activists to harness their activism to the sluggish and bureaucratic pace of the labour movement. That's not what we want to say at all!

The other potential negative interpretation of "worker-student unity" is one that advocates a relationship between students and workers which is a marriage of convenience between two sets of people on the receiving end of the government's cuts assault.

That strategic alliance might include student speakers appearing at trade union events and vice versa, it might include trade unionists attending student actions, it might include calling joint demonstrations. All of that is positive and should be fought for — and students do need the workers' movement if they are to win more of their demands! — but there's a key ingredient missing.

For students, an orientation to the labour movement is not just about seeking powerful allies but also about looking to the only force capable of consistently fighting for and winning the reorganisation of society.

In most workplaces, AWL members have found that our workmates and our fellow trade unionists have been inspired by the students' action.

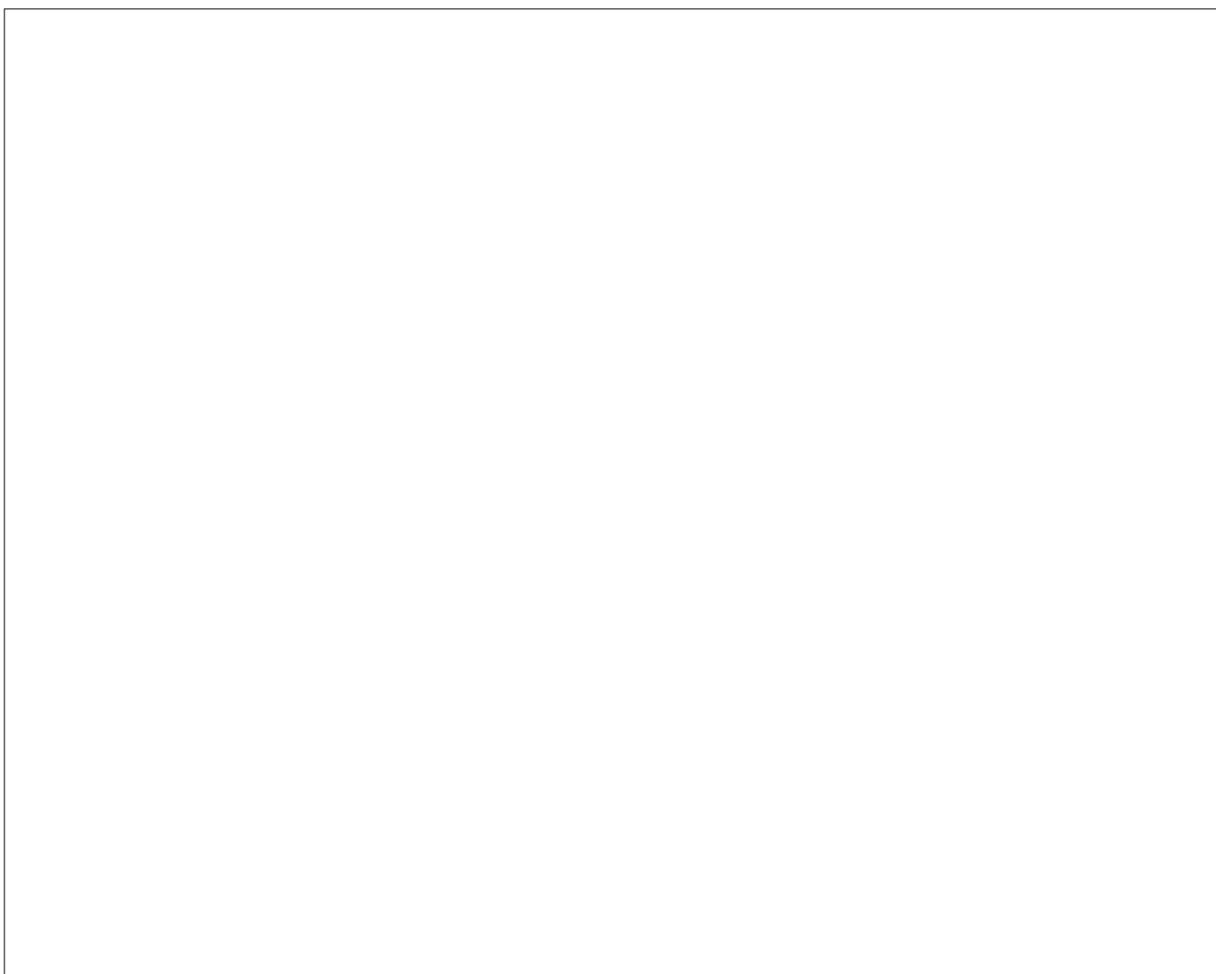
It has shown them that resistance is possible, and it has made them question why our unions — possessed of far greater resources and potential powers of organisation than any student activist network — are so reluctant to organise anything similar.

Politically, most workers understand that higher education has not been the sole preserve of middle-class people for some time, but that the government's plan is about returning it to that condition.

The education funding proposals are a direct assault on the right of working-class people to high-quality education, and the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance for further education and sixth form students is another cut that will hit the poorest people hardest.

The education funding battle is as much a class issue as any fight over wages, terms and conditions.

Much of the onus in building unity must be on the



The student protest has brought wit and wisdom as well as dynamism to the fight against the cuts

labour movement. Many student activists networks have been generated in struggle by the recent movement are still organised on an ad hoc basis; the labour movement has the resources, and permanently-organised structures, to take the initiative. We must also remember that today's student activists, even those with working-class politics, have grown up in a period in which the labour movement was all but invisible as a social force. Even students who wish to reach out to the union may not know how. Therefore trade unionists must endeavour to reach out to them.

That means delegations from union branches and trades councils visiting student occupations, as striking RMT members and TSSA members have been doing in London.

It means supporting student actions in whatever way we can, even if that's just by visiting demonstrations on our lunch hour with our union banners or by producing supportive statements, like the one signed by several NUT National Executive members (initiated by AWL member Patrick Murphy).

It means producing joint statements, like that from the RMT's Regional Secretary in London and leading members of the National Campaign Against Fees.

It means calling joint actions, as the RMT, PCS and student activists are doing in Newcastle on 5 December.

It means developing mutual solidarity, as students in London have been doing by visiting picket lines during the recent tube strike.

It means inviting students to speak at union branches and trades councils.

The conservatism of our unions at a national level is an obstacle here.

Historically, any joint work between the labour movement and the student movement at this level has been mediated through the National Union of Students, an organisation whose role in the recent movements has graduated from obscene to merely treacherous (it first denounced the direct-action movement as "despicable", then promised support, then reneged on the promise).

But by providing models of unity at a local level, rank-and-file activists can build up pressure within their unions to change the national direction. We cannot wait for movement at the top; if even one branch of one union in one city is prepared to move, it must.

Ultimately, student-worker unity must mean joint direct action on the basis of class-struggle politics. The students' fight is a class battle. We need common ownership of a struggle based on a working-class resistance to the government's programme.

In the first instance, that means developing ongoing student-worker committees on every campus to discuss joint action. Socialists in the education sector, or in unions with members in the education sector, must fight, at every possible level for the union, for support for the students' struggles. Not just opposition to the government's plans, but practical support for all the activity students students are organising, based on the kinds of practical unity proposed above.

Other unions should back the NUS/UCU national demonstration called for the day of the vote on the government's legislation to raise fees.

If the kind of unity and solidarity that is being developed locally can be amplified nationally, then the wave of student action will have played its most valuable possible role; to have catalysed a long-dormant labour movement into life. If it does that, the possibilities are limitless.

LONDON FIREFIGHTERS

FBU votes on compromises

BY DARREN BEDFORD

London firefighters will vote in December on whether to accept new shift patterns as recommended by a dispute arbitration panel.

London firefighters were facing mass sackings after Section 188 notices were imposed in August. The sackings were due to begin from 18 November, but after two successful strikes and the threat of bonfire night action, London fire brigade management agreed to put back the deadline to January, improve their offer on shifts and go to arbitration.

The arbitration panel, known as RAP, produced its recommendations on 22 November. Unusually, it made two alternative proposals and said firefighters should vote on which one they want. The options are: 1. two 11-hour day shifts and two 13-hour night shifts with no strings; and 2. two 10.5 hour day shifts and two-13.5 hour night shifts, with direct standbys.

The Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) will now put the options to members, along with the chance to reject both. The union's London regional committee voted overwhelmingly to recommend the 10.5/13.5 option, arguing that anything with a 10 in it was better for firefighters. This view was endorsed by an FBU all-reps meeting. London fire brigade management want the 11/13 option.

Both options are worked by other firefighters elsewhere in the UK and there are mixed views on them. The strings attached to 10.5/13.5 on direct standbys mean firefighters can be called the night before a shift and told to work from another station the following day, for a set payment of £35. (Currently they go to their usual station first and then get reassigned). It is not clear whether this is workable, but it might actually mean appliances go out fully crewed — a demand firefighters have long made on safety grounds.

SWP journalists and bloggers have opposed both options. But the new shifts are a compromise, foisted on the FBU by the imposition of the sacking notices and

the weakness of the movement. Not every compromise is a sell out.

No firefighters lose their job or work longer hours with either shift option. The FBU believes the 10.5/13.5 is the best they are likely to get, even with more strikes. The alternative will be imposition of whatever management want — and that really would be a defeat.

The SWP says reject the options and get the strikes back on. They combine voluntarism with syndicalism — ignoring the threat of imposition and imagining that firefighters are keen for strikes on a scale that can radically change the options. They do not propose a coherent alternative strategy, preferring instead verbal radicalism.

They ignore what happened in South Yorkshire a year ago, when firefighters organised two 24-hour strikes and five 8-hour strikes, with further 8-day strikes planned. The FBU still only just managed to avoid imposition of new shifts and ended with 11-13, endorsed by a big majority.

Lenin's *Left Wing Communism* (1920) is instructive: "Every proletarian has been through strikes and has experienced 'compromises' with the hated oppressors and exploiters, when the workers have had to return to work either without having achieved anything or else agreeing to only a partial satisfaction of their demands.

"Every proletarian... sees the difference between a compromise enforced by objective conditions (such as lack of strike funds, no outside support, starvation and exhaustion)... and, on the other hand, a compromise by traitors who try to ascribe to objective causes their self-interest (strike-breakers also enter into 'compromises!'), their cowardice, desire to toady to the capitalists, and readiness to yield to intimidation, sometimes to persuasion, sometimes to sops, and sometimes to flattery from the capitalists."

The FBU is not pretending the settlement is perfect. Rather it recognises the dangers of having a worse deal imposed and the limits of a prolonged battle over shifts.

BA DISPUTE

Cabin Crew to ballot again

In a bitter dispute which has lasted months, seen several rounds of strike action, court injunctions and victimisations, British Airways bosses remain intransigent and committed to breaking the back of the cabin crew workers' union.

Unite decided not to recommend acceptance of BA's latest offer, which failed to make any significant concessions on the docking of pay and travel allowances (which have become central issues in the dispute) and eventually the offer was not even put to ballot. *Solidarity* spoke to an activist from BASSA, the section of Unite which organises cabin crew, about the dispute.

"There was supposed to be a ballot on the last BA offer to see if the crew were in favour of accepting it. However because there were so many conditions laid down by BA about what the crew could and couldn't do in the future (if they accepted the deal) it was decided the ballot would be a waste of time. One of the major sticking points was that in order to accept the proposal, and so get staff travel back with full seniority in two years,

all the litigation against BA had to stop. This included people who were sick during the strike, who had thousands of pounds deducted from their salaries.

"As I understand it, as each case comes up BA are being forced to back down and crew are being paid, but at the last count there were still more than 1000 cases outstanding against the company.

"Should these all go ahead and BA chooses to fight even a small proportion of them, it will cost the company a substantial sum of money. The management at BA have presumably have taken advice and know that they will lose the majority of these cases.

"Since the decision to turn down BA's offer was made, everything has gone very quiet. Crew still continue to be suspended for strike related issues, the latest a crew member who was trying to make a Christmas collection for crew who were currently suspended or had been sacked.

"In short, the atmosphere at work is terrible and sickness is at a record high. I can only think that the next step will be a further ballot for strike action."

TUBE STRIKE

Fight for rank-and-file control

BY LORI SMITH

Tube workers braved wintry conditions to turn out on picket lines across the combine for a fourth time on 28/29 November.

The strike remained solid and affected services on every line, forcing some to close entirely at various points throughout the day.

One picket at Mile End station said: "It's another successful day. We're fighting for jobs and safety.

"I've been working nights this week and I've seen six trains taken out of service due to safety problems. That's the sort of thing that will only get worse if these cuts are allowed to go through.

"This station has been opened up by two managers; they're not properly trained. They don't know anything about the equipment and they can't be properly familiar with safety procedures. One manager has gone into work not wearing a proper uniform; that's the sort of thing we'd get picked up on for, but it's all right for them to do if they're working to break a strike.

"The strike's still solid, and it's been solid all the way through. We're going to carry on fighting, but we do need more than 24-hour strikes. They need to be longer — perhaps even a week at a time."

The question of where to take the dis-

pute from here was a constant on picket lines across the city. Almost everyone *Solidarity* spoke to was in favour of escalating the dispute, many wanting action sooner than the union seems prepared to call it. Quoted in countless newspapers on the day of the strike itself and since, Bob Crow (the general secretary of the RMT) has supported escalation — but also signalled strongly that there will be no further action before the new year.

Crow said, "We are moving towards an escalation of the action, [but] I don't think it will be appropriate to have action over Christmas. I will not be recommending any action this side of 2 January, but come 2011 we will have to consider escalating strikes to more than one day." Trouble is, London Underground's date for its job cuts is 18 February. Leaving action until January is leaving it very late.

The situation highlights the democratic deficit in the running of the dispute; Strike committees exist (within the RMT), but the ultimate say on the direction of the strike resides with the national executives of the unions.

If the strike committees were given real power, then the rank-and-file pressure for escalation could be channelled into a forum where it could actually have an impact. Fighting for escalation, combined with a fight for rank-and-file control of the dispute, are key tasks for RMT and TSSA activists now.

"Fight on in difficult times"

A tube worker gives her views about the dispute

There is no such thing as enjoyment when participating in official industrial action. It just means that unfortunately neither the management nor the unions were able to reach an agreement and that communication levels have broken down.

Although I am 100% behind the union and this very worthy cause, there is still that uncertainty of how long is the strike going to continue for, what terms are likely to be agreed upon, etc. Members are losing money, that's a fact, but we have to remember to see beyond that, and to look at the bigger picture.

I strongly believe that members need to remain supportive and continue to fight on during these difficult times. I also believe that there needs to be a stronger presence on picket lines, to show solidarity, and strength. All members and their representatives would ideally prefer to avoid strike action where possible, but unfortunately when all other action has been exhausted, there is no alternative but to take part in strike action.

The management want to run 100% service [during strike days] and I feel that at times managers are somewhat economical with the truth, claiming that a bigger percentage of the network is running when statistics have proven otherwise. The strike has had a strong impact on management overall. Several stations have been shut as a direct result of the strike, and the overtime ban has also proved highly effective.

The media are extremely biased against trade unions. Many people have been in support of the strike. That is never shown or reported through media

coverage. Whenever members of the public do offer support in interviews, it is never shown or advertised. Negative publicity seems to always highlight trade unions.

Ordinary RMT and TSSA members do have a say in how the dispute is run. Regular meetings take place prior to the strike commencing, discussing possible action to take, including the duration of any strike and action short of a strike. Question and answer sessions take place ensuring that those who wish to give some sort of input are strongly encouraged to.

I would like to think that this dispute is seen as Underground staff simply trying to defend their jobs, and by doing so protecting the public from any safety implications caused by a reduction in staffing levels.

Until an agreement can be met from both parties, I believe that possibly increasing the industrial action from 24 hours to 48 hours would prove more effective. We should continue the overtime ban that is currently still in place. Ultimately both parties need to communicate with one another until they are able to negotiate a successful outcome. It's about showing resistance, and eventually compromising.

COALITION OF RESISTANCE

Conference calls for February week of action

BY DANIEL RANDALL

On 27 November over a thousand people attended the Coalition of Resistance conference in London, and responded enthusiastically to speeches calling for militancy against the cuts.

The platform called for support for the TUC anti-cuts march on 26 March 2011, and for a week of action from 14 February (around the "Housing Emergency" lobby of Parliament on 16 February).

AWL members attended the conference, calling for anti-cuts unity and for a political orientation to making the labour movement fight against the cuts and for a workers' government.

We advocated that COR (run by the SWP splinter group Counterfire, with allies), Right To Work (SWP), and National Shop Stewards' Network (SP) fix a joint conference instead of competing.

On those issues the outcome was mixed.

In the closing speeches there was a contrast between Chris Bambery (of the SWP and Right To Work) and John Rees (of Counterfire and the Coalition of Resistance).

Bambery called for unity and emphasised that "no one organisation can claim to lead the movement". John Rees, on the other hand, was on the attack. "This is the movement", he announced. "This is the conference. There is no other conference down the road".

Both Bambery and the COR conference text said that activists in every locality should unite in a single anti-cuts committee (i.e. instead of having competing COR, RTW, etc. groups). We must hope that local practice will now live up to those statements.

The Socialist Party's leaflet dismissed the COR conference as "top-down" and instead recommended the NSSN conference on 22 January.

The COR conference was dominated by top-table speakers, 20-odd of them in the opening and closing plenaries. The core of the event was being talked at by movement celebrities, sometimes well, sometimes not so well.

Len McCluskey, the general secretary-elect of Unite (Britain's biggest trade union), sent mixed signals. He made this militant left-wing conference his first public engagement since his election, and he quoted Frederick Engels in

his speech. But he also exhibited some of the nationalism that has poisoned elements of the labour movement, by presenting the fact that British workers have "worse rights than German, Italian and Spanish workers" as unfair because British workers had "saved Europe from fascism and won the rights other European workers enjoy for them".

Bob Crow dropped his characteristic anti-Labour Party demagoguery and called for a fight against "the right wing in the Labour Party" rather than the Labour Party itself.

The closing plenary was supposed to discuss amendments to the conference declaration and elections to the National Council, but was instead persuaded to co-opt all 122 (un-named) nominees to the Council and remit all the amendments. Power remains with the Steering Committee (elected when, and by whom?).

There were workshops, including an extra one on women and cuts, added to the agenda after pressure from Feminist Fightback, which is reported separately; but generally discussion was limited, and some workshops seemed token.

For example, the one on climate change combined lifestylism ("people need to install solar panels on their house", from a Green Party member) with popular frontism ("we need to get people like Tim Yeo on board" from platform-speaker Peter Robinson) and bland waffle.

At the workshop billed as dealing with political representation, speakers were a Green Party councillor; Liz Davies, who declared herself a critical supporter of the Green Party; Billy Bragg, who spoke not about the cuts but to argue for voting yes in the May 2011 referendum on AV; and *Guardian* contributor Laurie Penny. It was chaired by a Green Party member and allowed little debate.

Probably the COR organisers did not really want to promote the Green Party (or AV). They just didn't mind much about political debate, and saw the workshops as cheap ways to get some Green Party support.

There was more talk about "people power" from the platform than about *working-class* struggle or socialism. Right To Work, similarly, is calling its February conference a "People's Convention".

Yet the conference may well have been an inspiring experience for some. They will have gone away feeling part of a big movement. Let's hope the energy feeds into the anti-cuts committees.

CIVIL SERVICE

Jobs are important too!

A CIVIL SERVANT

In the first half of 2011 we face mass compulsory redundancies. Our union cannot sit through these attacks. Our slogan has to be: defend pensions and employment.

It now seems likely that the leadership of the PCS civil service workers' union is gearing itself up for a ballot on pensions in April next year.

How that fits in with the plan of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to have strike action in March 2011 we shall see. It would not be the first time if the two unions failed to co-ordinate action at roughly the same time over the same issue.

Assume, though, that NUT and PCS will agree on common dates for ballots and action(s). The interesting question is whether UNISON will join in. At the moment there is no indication that they will.

Clearly pensions must be defended. John Hutton's report means higher contributions from members. In fact, the unions, in their 2005 agreement with the then New Labour government, agreed that higher contributions would be paid if pension costs rose above an agreed amount).

It also means a pension age of 65 (in 2005 the unions agreed that 65 would be the pension age for new entrants, while older workers could still get pensions at 60: the proposals that the union will resist are proposals that the union accepted for all new staff entering the civil service from 2007 onwards).

Hutton is also looking at a fundamental re-structuring of pension schemes.

But if you haven't a job, then future increases in pension contributions are academic.

According to the *Guardian* (3 November): "Ministers have already earmarked more than 100,000 civil service posts to be cut as the government sets about reducing its administration costs by a third".

We are expecting an announcement that 14,000 staff in the Ministry of Justice

will be cut. We know that 25,000 jobs will go in the Ministry of Defence.

Many of these cuts have been "front-loaded"; that is programmed for the first two years of the current four year spending period. Such front-loading greatly increases the risk of compulsory redundancies.

The first mass compulsory redundancies will probably occur in the Government Offices (GOs), the network of offices that handles cross-departmental work in the English regions.

We expect the 90 day consultation period over compulsory redundancies in the Government Offices to begin in the next few days. In total 1,300 staff are "surplus" in the GOs, and the government is prepared to make all of them compulsorily redundant.

The PCS has not reacted accordingly. The dispute which the union leadership is considering will focus primarily on pensions.

The PCS leadership believes that the pensions issue unifies all civil servants and all workers in the public sector, whereas the job cuts are unevenly spread across departments and across time.

But a trade union should serve its members on the basic issue of jobs, and not subordinate that to the union leaders' calculations of strategic neatness.

PCS members should be consulted now on action over job cuts. Job cuts should be given equal billing with pensions in all union literature to pensions. PCS should argue with the other public service unions that job cuts — whether through redundancies or through outsourcing, etc., are also an issue that unites us all.

LEWISHAM

Labour council calls riot police

BY CATHY NUGENT

On 29 November Lewisham Anti Cuts Alliance organised a peaceful protest outside the Town Hall against a first wave of cuts (around £20 million, with a possible £78 million coming over the next three years).

The protest involved local unions and users of public services. Students from Goldsmiths College marched through Lewisham to the protest. Already the council has announced the closure of five libraries, the Amersham Children's Centre and the Opening Doors employment centres. It has made 466 council workers redundant.

Around 150-200 people gathered from 5.30pm onwards in the freezing cold, and many wanted to go into the public gallery of the council chamber. However the council were only going to let 28 in.

An orderly queue formed and people were searched by security guards and the police. At 7.30pm when the meeting was due to start a protest began to gath-

er outside the doors of the Council.

Protesters were met with harassment and abuse from council security guards and the police, who were illegally denying people from right to attend council meetings.

Riot police assaulted protesters, cleared the public gallery of all visitors, violently cleared the lobby. Local roads were closed and later still police reinforcements came in with dogs and horses. This is a Labour council!

Later in the evening, in a room closed off to the public, every Labour councillor voted for the cuts. Two Tories and one Green voted against.

In a previous response to LACA's appeal for the Labour Council to not pass on cuts Labour member Michael Harris said that these cuts are necessary and "democratic and socialist".

And the riot police are "democratic" and "socialist" too?

• www.workersliberty.org/issues/issues-and-campaigns/public-services

Women Against the Cuts

Around 70 women attended the women's caucus at COR conference. It was agreed to organise a further meeting on Thursday 2 December to decide on what banner and with what structure to organise a women's coalition against the cuts.

The meeting was lively and there was not enough time to discuss everything. One motion did go forward — a 50% quota for COR national council — but was dismissed by the top table.

Meanwhile, Women Against Cuts (a new umbrella group) organised a successful demonstration outside the Treasury in London on 30 November. Despite the clash with student demonstrations and the freezing weather, around 100 women made it to this protest against the cuts.

More information: womenagainstthecuts.wordpress.com

EDUCATION WHITE PAPER

Outlawing lefties and the unions

BY PAT MURPHY, NUT NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, PERSONAL CAPACITY

Ask most parents, children or teachers to identify the main problems and in all likelihood a core of issues will be held in common by all three groups.

Classes are too large, there is too little money for resources, too many classes are taught by unqualified teachers or teachers not qualified in the subject they are expected to teach.

The government does not agree.

In last week's government education White Paper Professor Alan Smithers of Buckingham University set out the problems as he saw it — left-wing councils, university training departments and the teaching unions.

The *Sunday Times* headlined the White Paper as "giving leftie teachers a good caning". These are the forces most often described by the right as "the education establishment".

In a bizarre parallel universe inhabited by Cameron, Clegg, and Michael Gove, the persistence of inequality of outcomes in education is nothing to do with social inequality, poverty or the tearing up of working-class communities by their predecessors in the 1980s. What holds back all children, but particularly poorer children, is a combination of local elected councils, trendy teaching ideas and powerful classroom unions.

The antidote to this is maximum autonomy for schools.

Freedom from local authorities will come via a huge expansion of the academy system and a reduction in their responsibilities and the money available to fund local services.

Teacher training will become more school-based, so that colleges can no longer, as Michael Gove put it, "get peo-

ple into the wrong mindset".

And, the hope is, teacher unions will be significantly weakened as individual schools set their own pay and conditions and it becomes harder to negotiate all-staff local agreements. And the growth of academies and free schools could threaten the ability of elected lay union reps to defend and organise members by undermining union facilities arrangements.

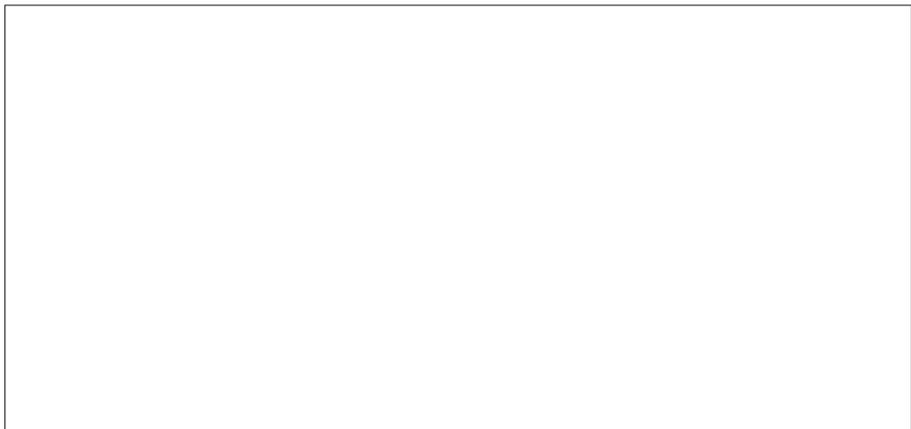
Outside of the more unhinged right-wing commentariat (Melanie Phillips, the *Spectator*, Chris Woodhead) there is no serious research or evidence to suggest that an end to national pay, lots of different kinds of schools, and much weaker local authorities will improve schools.

The White Paper cites OECD studies of pupil performance across the economically advanced world to justify its proposals. It cites selectively, very selectively indeed.

Among conventional liberal capitalist societies, regular studies of outcomes in numeracy and literacy carried out by the OECD have persistently shown that the best results are achieved in Finland and Sweden, with South Korea and Japan close behind. The most striking thing about the school system in those countries is how comprehensive it is. Almost all children go to state-run, local authority-managed schools, and there is little or no selection or diversity between schools.

Finland and Sweden also have large and universal welfare states, and all four countries much have much lower levels of social and income inequality than Britain.

The White Paper completely ignores all this, and hones in on fairly peripheral aspects of those systems as the key to success. Sweden has some free schools, though recent government reports have



Micheal Gove: "I did Latin and it made me into the rigorous thinker you see before you today."

found that they worsen social segregation and there appears to be a retreat from that idea. Finland requires teachers to have good first degrees, so Gove has borrowed that idea.

In fact the real model for this White Paper is the USA. Gove's free schools are based explicitly on the US charter schools, which despite much spin to the contrary have not improved outcomes for inner city children and have done immense damage to the rest of the public school system.

There is also, as usual with the Tories, a sprinkling of barmy policy ideas such as getting injured soldiers into teaching to instil discipline, and reintroducing Latin and classics to ensure rigour and intellectual challenge in state schools.

Where the Paper comes close to identifying some real problems, it then promptly proposes more of the same policies which caused these problems in the first place.

It complains, for example, that too many schools have dropped proper academic subjects at GCSE in favour of courses that are not recognised as equiv-

alents by colleges or employers and conned pupils, particularly working class pupils, out of a decent education. There is a lot in this, but the main culprits have been academies and they have done it to win the immensely high-stakes battle to "prove" they can raise "standards" (i.e. exam results).

Elsewhere the Paper boasts that academies have improved standards better than other schools. This is actually a lie; only about a third of academies can claim that, and they have done it by selecting different children and/or teaching different and "easier", less demanding, courses.

This White Paper should by rights be thrown out in Parliament. Not only every Labour MP should vote against, but so too should every Lib Dem, if they have any sense at all.

All the attention at the moment is on the Lib Dem betrayal of their election pledge to abolish tuition fees. It can easily be forgotten that they also pledged to oppose academies. That was another part of their claim to be more radical and progressive than Labour.

SCOTLAND

Pay freeze... and tuition fees on the horizon

BY ANNE FIELD

The SNP minority government in Holyrood has announced its proposed budget for 2011-12 (although current opinion polls suggest that the SNP will be voted out of office only four weeks into that financial year).

The Westminster grant to the Scottish government for 2011-12 will be cut by £1.2 billions. Over the next three years the Westminster grant is to be reduced by a total of £3.3 billions — an overall cut of 11% in real terms.

In the 1980s and early 1990s the SNP used to mock the Labour Party for failing to stand up to the then Tory government despite having control of most Scottish councils and 50 elected MPs in Scotland. Now the SNP has stepped into Labour's shoes and is tamely passing on the Con-Dem cuts.

Public sector workers earning £21,000 a year or more will have their pay frozen. Those earning less than this will have their pay increased by a maximum of £250 a year — well short of what is needed to keep up with inflation.

This pay freeze will also set what SNP

Finance Secretary John Swinney called "a framework" for pay negotiations with NHS staff, teachers, police and firefighters — meaning that they can expect to be offered the same.

"Efficiency savings" (i.e. cuts) of 3% are to be made in all Scottish government departments. Other cuts which the Scottish government plans to make are: £100 million (20%) from the housing and regeneration budget, and £200 million from the higher and further education budget.

(A report due later this year will address the question of university funding and may propose the introduction of fees in Scotland.)

A number of capital projects are to be funded using the so-called "Non-Profit-Distributing" model. This is the SNP's version of Labour's Public Private Partnership.

Local authority funding will be cut by 2.6%. But if local authorities fail to maintain police officer numbers, pupil-teacher ratios in the first three years of primary school, teaching posts, and the council tax freeze, then their funding will be cut by 6.4%. The SNP is trying to sell this as a reward for good behaviour!

In fact it represents an attack on local government democracy: any council that failed to adhere to the criteria set by the SNP government would need to levy an electorally suicidal double-digit council tax increase in order to compensate for the 6.4% cut in funding. Councils have until just before Christmas to make up their minds.

Labour's response to the SNP budget, on which the final debate and vote will take place in February of next year, has been toothless.

SNP policies of maintaining concessionary travel and scrapping all prescription charges have been dismissed by Labour as "vanity projects" — a view certainly not shared by those who deservedly benefit from them.

The extension of the council tax freeze has been condemned by Labour (along with all the public sector unions) but in restrained terms (because Labour shares the SNP's view that it is likely to prove electorally popular) and in the absence of any alternative.

Labour's condemnation of the SNP budget is also riddled with hypocrisy — Labour's Public Private Partnership was as least as bad as the "Non-Profit-

Distributing" scheme, and if the SNP is passing on the Tories' cuts, then Labour-controlled councils are themselves guilty of passing on the SNP's cuts.

A week after the SNP's budget announcement, for example, Labour-controlled Glasgow City Council announced its own budget for 2011-12.

Nearly £35 million is to be cut from the education budget, terms and conditions of council staff and teachers will be "reviewed" (i.e. worsened), mobile crèche facilities will be scrapped, and school meal prices will increase.

The social care budget will be cut, admission charges to sports facilities will be increased, voluntary sector funding will be cut and higher rents charged to voluntary sector organisations based in council properties.

The Unison-initiated "Defend Glasgow Services" campaign has written to all Glasgow MSPs and councillors, urging them to vote against the Scottish government and city council budget proposals, and to campaign instead for the adoption of "needs budgets".

This is the right demand to raise. But sustained campaigning will be needed if this is to be achieved.

ADAM KELLER

The long road to peace in Israel-Palestine

Sacha is one of nine members, supporters and friends of the AWL are in Israel/Palestine on a solidarity delegation attending demonstrations, meeting Palestinian and Israeli trade unionists and activists. Adam Keller an Israeli socialist, and spokesperson for the left-wing peace group Gush Shalom, spoke to Sacha Ismail.

I have been involved in the Israeli left, in all kinds of campaigns and action committees and political parties, since I was at school. I have the same position as your group: a two state settlement, on the 1967 borders, Jerusalem as the capital of both.

I've had a lot of contact with the AWL since the early 80s. Several times I visited England on your invitation, once doing a whole month of lectures and meetings, from Canterbury to Newcastle. I got heckled by the SWP several times! I understand that you have the same sort of problems now.

I am a socialist, but Gush Shalom is not a socialist group. Gush Shalom only a policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In principle you could join if you were Thatcherite but agreed with our position on the conflict. In practice, most people are on the left, but many are not socialists. Civil equality in Israel, the fight against racism and so on, are very much part of our fight in support of the Palestinians.

I am also involved with — and once stood as a Knesset candidate for — the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, Hadash, which is linked to the Israeli Communist Party. I am not a member of the CP, and I was not fond of the USSR while it existed. But they are the only real political party in Israel where there is real partnership between Arabs and Jews.

The Hadash Knesset member with whom I have most contact, Dov Khenin, looks to Gramsci as a thinker. He is not really a Stalinist.

Kenin's quite remarkable achievement is that he ran for mayor of Tel Aviv, and got 31 percent of the vote on the back of quite a big grassroots movement, around issues like public transport, housing, and the environment. He got support from the slums of south Tel Aviv, which are right-wing in national politics, by agreeing to disagree about the Palestinians and agreeing on local or class issues. The existing mayor is Labour Party-affiliated but a pretty consistent promoter of the interests of the rich against the poor.

In Israel left and right are generally defined by the conflict, so this was a change.

I am sometimes involved in workers' struggles or social issues, but my main work concerns the conflict. That's more than enough to provide full-time work for an activist!

Gush Shalom started in 1992, shortly after Rabin was elected Prime Minister of Israel. Rabin started with a tough policy. After an Israeli policeman was kidnapped and killed by Hamas, his government arrested 400 Palestinians involved in Islamist groups and deported them to Lebanon. These were political not military activists, and not involved in the killing.

We felt the more established peace movement, for instance Peace Now, was very mild, particularly because this was a Labour Party government. We had a big public meeting and out of that we started a tent encampment outside Rabin's office, to stay until the deportees were allowed back. The tents were put up by Bedouin from the Negev. We stayed for two months. We had a lot of discussions, including with many Muslim and even Islamist people. We discussed religion and politics and how they interact.

The name of our group was the Jewish-Arab Committee Against Deportations.

In 1993 when Bill Clinton came to office there was a deal with Rabin that the deportees could come back within a year, but we decided to carry on as a more generalised campaign. That was the start of Gush Shalom.

Shortly after that there was a rumour of secret negotiations with the PLO. I remember we demonstrated outside the Labour Party headquarters, and we had a big drawing of Rabin and Arafat shaking hands. At the time this was a kind of science fiction, and yet three months later it became reality!

There was a time after the Oslo Agreement when we had big illusions that our work was nearly finished. We found ourselves supporting Rabin.

Now, the Oslo Agreement was designed by Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals of good will, with the help of Norwegian intellectuals. They left a lot of important

areas blank, thinking they could be filled in later. They had the idea that the small problems could be solved first, and the big ones later. With hindsight this was not a good approach.

The people left to fill in the blanks were the army, the secret services, the settlers. They gave the only minimum, and they never gave today what they could give tomorrow. The people in charge made sure that the occupation could stay and the settlements could stay and grow.

Then there was the question of Palestinian prisoners. There were thousands and thousands in Israeli prisons. We argued for a general amnesty, which would have given an enormous boost to the peace process, since most families in the Occupied Territories have or have had someone in prison. Less than 10 percent were released. As a result the Palestinian leadership carried out a series of actions against Israel.

There was a feeling of frustration and disappointment on both sides. The Palestinians were disappointed, while the right wing in Israel capitalised on the small number of releases.

In 1994 there was a massacre in Hebron, when the US born Jewish extremist Baruch Goldstein massacred 29 Muslim worshippers. In response there was a wave of suicide bombings in Israel. It is often forgotten that this had not happened before.

There were a lot of right-wing demos against Rabin, really violent, calling for people to kill him. We organised our own rally, and 200,000 people turned out. After the end of the rally, hundreds of young people stayed to talk and dance, with Brazilian samba music. It was then that we learned that Rabin had been shot and taken to hospital, and we learned that he was dead.

Young people changed the name of the square to Rabin Square, and the opportunistic mayor of Tel Aviv made it official. Now there is always a memorial rally of peace-minded people, usually 100,000 or more. This broad movement is pro-peace in a general, vague sense; the left-wing minority of it is anti-occupation.

Of course I don't like Hamas, and in an independent Palestinian state I would not want them to win elections. But that's not the point here.

1. It's up to the Palestinians to define who represents them. If you start picking your favourite Palestinians, that's problematic.

2. Any Israeli attempt to exclude Hamas only helps them.

When I was first involved in politics, the idea that you would talk to the PLO was very radical. For seven years it was illegal in Israel to meet or shake hands with a member of the PLO and you could get three years in prison. (I violated this rule when I toured Britain with the AWL!) We always called for the government to talk to them.

Hamas are not the same as the PLO, but the basic principle is the same. Instead the US and Israel helped Palestinian security services begin a civil war against Hamas.

Israel had a good chance to make a deal with Arafat. A deal made with him could have stuck. Instead, however, they delegitimised Arafat, and now there is a Palestinian leadership in the West Bank that is very unrepresentative.

I have faced many horrible things in my time as a peace activist — vilification, death threats — but nothing as difficult as persuading Israelis that the "generous" offer made by Ehud Barack at Camp David was not so generous. It looked good because he was willing to talk about Jerusalem, which was something new. In fact, the Palestinians were being offered only the Jordan valley and no real control.

The official narrative is that the Palestinians walked

away for a measly two or three percent. In fact, they were offered a land exchange, but it was not equal in territory or value. Barack offered one square km for every nine taken, and wanted to take all the most fertile land in exchange for desert.

I doubt even one percent of Israelis know all this! The result is now that most people in Israel think that peace was tried, failed and is impossible, with disastrous consequences for the left and the peace movement. We used to be able to hold rallies of hundreds of thousands; now when we get a few thousands we're pleased.

During the 2006 Lebanon war and the Gaza war, there were lots of demos, even big ones, but there was no growth of the movement. The same people were involved at the start and the end.

We did not succeed in getting the kind of snowball effect we had during the first Lebanon war in 1982.

I think Sharon's strategy [later prime minister, Ariel Sharon was a minister of defence at the time] was that he wanted the expulsion of all Palestinians to Lebanon, then Syria, then Jordan, so that the Hashemite monarchy would fall and there would be a Palestinian state on the East Bank of the Jordan and more room for Israel to expand in the West. Our protests forced Sharon to leave the ministry of defence, and we thought we had got rid of him for good!

In recent wars, there had been nothing like that. We are a small, militant minority. During the Gaza war we had about 10,000 people out, which is not bad, but not on the same scale.

The basic problem is this feeling among Israelis that peace has been tried and failed. It's like the problem of explaining socialism when most people feel that the experience of Stalinism was an experiment in socialism. We need to say no that was not socialism, and no that was not peace, but it's hard to explain!

Because of this I don't think peace will come as a result of a general upsurge from within Israel. We had a chance of this in 1993, but now now. What may happen now is a peace imposed from without, especially by the US, with some support from inside Israel.

Arabs are a big minority in Israel, more than 20 percent, but they are excluded from real influence in political life. Of the Jews, maybe 10 percent are really pro-peace, with 10 percent committed to a Greater Israel. Most people think peace has failed but are not very enthusiastic about military solution seither. They could support either war or peace depending on where the government leads.

When Sharon decided to withdraw the settlements from Gaza in 2005, and replace direct occupation by a prolonged siege, the religious/nationalist right mobilised on a big scale, but they failed to mobilise broader forces. This could happen again. There is discussion that they might resort to an armed uprising, or even a military coup. The army is becoming more and more right-wing, with religious nationalists probably comprising a majority of the junior officer corps, and soon probably the senior officer corps. So there is a debate among left-wing people about whether they should join the army to neutralise this threat.

I don't rule out a revival of the left. Many things we thought absurd or impossible, good or bad, have happened. But I think the most likely scenario is pressure from outside. I'm afraid that means from above. I don't like this; I would much prefer pressure from below, from within Israeli society. But while Israelis will mobilise on many issues — gay rights, ecology, many others — it is now hard to mobilise them for peace.

I should add that some people support a two-state settlement for essentially racist reasons — they want Israeli to a Jewish state, and hope to get rid of the Arab population. Mainstream peace organisations like Peace Now to an extent pander to this. On the plus side some left Zionist forces, for instance the socialist Zionist youth, have become somewhat more radicalised.

The most useful things you can do are firstly to demand that if the Palestinians go to the UN to ask for recognition unilaterally this year, as some speculate, the British government and the EU support this. Secondly, Israel has put great pressure on Britain to abolish the law that allows war criminals from across the world to be tried in British courts.

It is essential you defend this. I know it sounds ridiculous, but if Israeli generals feel their holidays in London are under threat, it may deter them from some of the more extreme war crimes. Keeping this law could quite literally save lives in Gaza and the West Bank.

The shape of Miliband's Labour

David Osler, author of the 2002 study *Labour Party plc*, talked to *Solidarity* about prospects in the Labour Party.

Q. According to Ed Miliband on 27 November, 43,000 people have joined (or rejoined) the Labour Party since the general election in May 2010. Do you have any assessment of what this little surge represents, and what its effects are likely to be?

A. It's dangerous to generalise from purely local experience, but the new recruits I have met have tended to be nice concerned thirty-something professionals who have not previously been members of any political party.

Superficially they look, talk and dress like the Blairites who signed up in the 1990s, but the good news is that they are motivated by genuine political dislike of what the coalition is doing, rather than any desire to advance their careers.

They do not strike me as a particularly radical bunch, but that is only to be expected from a generation that has had no exposure to reform-socialist or even social democratic ideas.

What I have not witnessed is an influx of angry youth, poorly-paid workers or Trot group retreats, many of whom retain an active hostility to Labour, which is understandable given what they witnessed in the New Labour years. But let me repeat, these remarks are entirely based on immediate impressions.

Q. Ed Miliband was elected by union votes, against a big majority of MPs and a small majority of CLP voters who favoured David Miliband. And he promised a break with New Labour. Since then he seems to have put much effort into convincing the media that he is not "Red Ed" and not tied to the unions. Where do you think he is going?

A. Either Ed Miliband is the most resolutely lackadaisical leader of a major party in modern times, or he is making a deliberate point of not immediately setting a political direction and instead allowing the party time for reflection. If the latter is the case, the contrast with his predecessors is exemplary.

Yes, I did give him my second preference, in the full knowledge that Diane Abbott would be eliminated before he would be, and did so with the awareness that his opponents' attempts to brand him a Bennite were risible.

But if he drops the control freakery and presides over a climate in which it is permissible for members to speak their minds openly, that will be a step forward on the situation that obtained previously.

Obviously, Miliband did not back John McDonnell's Lawful Industrial Action (Minor Errors) Bill, and he has not exactly thrown himself behind the student protests. On the other hand, he has yet to do or say anything particularly ghastly. For now, I'm happy to cut him some slack.

Q. Your book "Labour Party plc", in 2002, documented a shift by the Labour Party towards not only ideological but also financial dependence on big business. It looks as if the Labour Party has been forced to revert somewhat to its old financial dependence on the unions. Is that so?



How stable do you think that reversion is?

Clearly I over-estimated the permanence of the shift, although I was carefully to include in the book the assessment that on balance Labour remained a workers' party, albeit only just. As the figures show, the unions are once again footing the bills.

I don't see much mileage in Miliband courting the super-rich in the way Blair did, if only because there is little chance of business leaders responding to flirtation.

Q. Do you think there is any new will and confidence in the unions to assert themselves in the Labour Party?

A. Even a few weeks ago, I would have said "no". I still don't think this is a project that the general secretaries of the big unions are particularly keen to undertake.

But clearly there is a potential for a change of mood among unionised working class and middle class people, as there has been among students, and that will inevitably have to find a political reflection. If that happens, the union leaderships will find themselves obliged to reflect it. Positive developments can't be ruled out.

Q. A comprehensive review of Labour Party structure is promised, but Ed Miliband appears to be loading the dice in advance by saying it should include giving a say in Labour Party decisions to people who are not even trade union political levy papers. What do you think the left should be pressing for in this review, and what do you see as the possible range of outcomes from the review?

I remember the post-1987 policy review under Kinnock, which represented the kind of "review" in which the outcome was never in doubt. My fear is that we are in for something similar this time round.

I'm happy to debate secondary nuances in internal procedures, and I'll willingly leave it to the rule book obsessives to follow the small print. But the left needs to set down some red lines, especially on meaningful union participation in important decisions.

Q. Do you think the coalition government will move on the Hayden Phillips proposals [for state funding of political parties], and how do you think the left should respond?

A. I had assumed that Hayden Phillips has been dead in the water since 2007. Then I noticed a speech from Nick Clegg in November, in which he demanded that political party funding be revisited. But obviously I have no inside knowledge of coalition deliberations on this one.

Labour councils

BY MARTIN THOMAS

In many areas Labour councillors say they will "fight the cuts" — but also implement them! They say they have no choice. In fact they can and should use their council positions as platforms to mobilise to defy the cuts.

The alternative is not a little harmless trimming. Central government is set to cut councils' funding by 25% over the next four and a half years. Since much that councils do is "statutory" — background stuff that they must do, by law — a 25% cut is huge social destruction.

Poplar's Labour council, in 1921, and the Labour council of the town of Clay Cross, in 1972-4, upheld the interests of their working-class communities by defying central government constraints, and won victories.

Poplar extracted extra funds for councils with a poor local tax base; Clay Cross created the pressure which made the incoming Labour government in 1974 repeal Tory legislation to force council rent rises.

During the Thatcher cuts of the 1980s, Liverpool's Labour council went to the brink of defying the government over cuts. It won solid working-class support for defiance.

The Liverpool council leadership, under the influence of Militant (now the Socialist Party), dodged and blinked at the crunch, and ended up making cuts. But if the councillors had held firm, Thatcher could probably have been beaten back over cuts (and the great miners' strike then underway could have won).

Defiance involves risk for councillors. The Poplar councillors were jailed for a short period; the Clay Cross councillors were surcharged and made bankrupt.

Like industrial strikes, council defiance cannot be made risk-free. The question for councillors, as for workers in a strike, is whether they are prepared to take risks in the cause of working-class solidarity, or choose to save their own position at the expense of others.

The risks of defiance are smaller now than they used to be. The details are given later in this article.

Labour councils which put working-class solidarity first should:

- Not make social cuts now!
- Whatever the coming central govern-

ment cuts, councils are large organisations with complex finances which give them leeway. They can cut top management, payments to consultants, and councillors' expenses. They can sell commercial assets. They can juggle accounts to move spending items from one financial year to the next. Although there are legal limits on councils borrowing, there may still be loopholes. (Liverpool council found one in 1985, borrowing from Swiss banks).

- Mobilise council workers, council tenants, and local communities for a fight. Financial gambits are no long-term answer, but they can allow for time to mobilise. Obviously councillors will have little credibility when calling on workers and tenants to fight unless they make a stand themselves.

- Aim towards a concerted act of local working-class defiance — councillors refusing to budget within central government limits, council workers striking, council tenants rent-striking, residents withholding council tax — with the demand that central government restores the money for local services.

If all Labour councils took this stand, then the Lib/Tory government would have to retreat very quickly. If even a sizeable few did, then the government would be in big trouble. Poplar and Clay Cross showed that even a single council, on its own, can win a victory.

Once mobilisation is started, it should be controlled democratically by a local delegate committee of working-class organisations, with the councillors taking part alongside others. The time to move to all-out defiance should be decided by that delegate committee.

It will depend on the tempo of mobilisation, on possibilities of linking up with other working-class struggles against the government, and so on.

"DEFICIT BUDGET"

The idea that Labour councils should mobilise against the cuts, rather than implementing them, is often expressed in terms of asking them to set "a deficit budget".

This is slightly misleading, for two

ON THE WEB

Illusions of Power: The Labour Left, Local Government, and the Challenge of Thatcherism

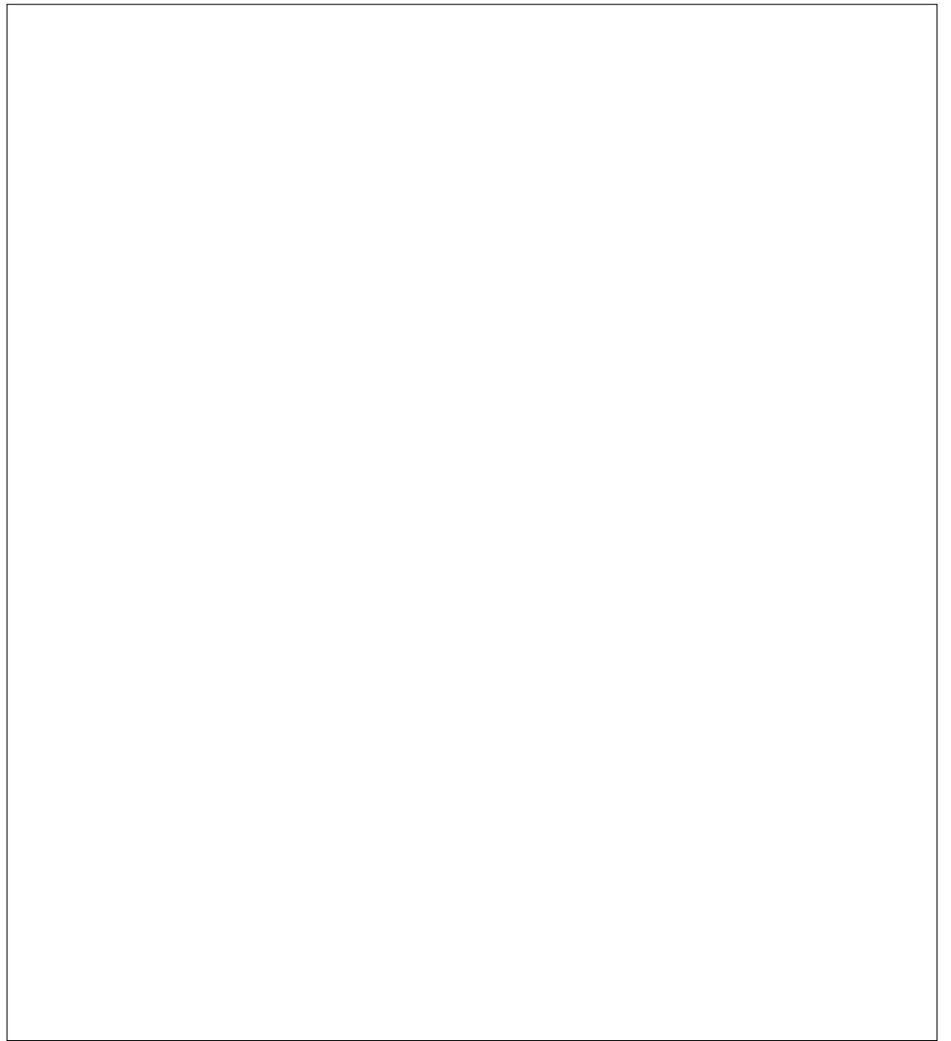
<http://www.workersliberty.org/illusions>

Liverpool: what went wrong?

<http://archive.workersliberty.org/publications/readings/trots/liverp.htm>

Councils should defy cuts!

Above, Vodafone tax evasion protest



Time for Labour councillors to put themselves on the line. Everybody else is doing that! Many Labour councils are behaving disgracefully. On 30 November Labour-controlled Lewisham council in south London got riot police to stop Lewisham people — workers and students — from getting into the council chamber. That night they voted through the first tranche of £78 million of cuts

reasons. Central governments often set deficit budgets (budgets in which spending exceeds income). They make good the gap by borrowing, or just by printing money.

Councils cannot print money, and have tight legal limits on their borrowing. A “deficit budget” is essentially an agitational gesture. It may be a good agitational gesture. But it will be a gesture to help mobilise, not the aim of the mobilisation.

The “deficit budget” formulation focuses everything on council budget day in April. That might be the right time to “go over the top”. Or it might not. The decision should be based on the democratic discussions of the local campaign, rather than administrative schedules.

The semi-defiant Labour councils of 1985 delayed budget-setting rather than setting illegal budgets. In the end they all set legal budgets. Liverpool and Lambeth councillors got surcharged, not for any decisive act of defiance, but for their delay in setting a budget.

Before 1985, left Labour councils had relied on raising rates (local property taxes, charged on tenants rather than owners) to offset central government cuts. The forerunners of AWL argued against this tack. It was a big debate within the left.

Nothing similar is an option now. Business rates are set by central government, not by councils. Domestic rates have been replaced by council tax.

Council tax income is as little as 10% of councils’ budgets, most of the rest coming from central government and from fees and charges, so to offset cuts of 25% in central government funding, council tax would have to be raised maybe 100%. Council tax is a regressive tax. In any case, central government has, and uses, powers to “cap” council tax rises.

In the past, defiant Labour councillors have been jailed and surcharged. In the 1980s, there was a standing threat of “commissioners” being sent in to push aside the elected councillors and run the local authority.

Under current legislation, those penalties seem no longer to exist. The first move against councillors taking a defiant stand is that unelected council officials — the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer (usually the Deputy Chief Executive) — are legally mandated to issue “warnings” to councillors acting “out of line”.

The councillors can override the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer, though only

after a “cooling-off period”.

If they do override the Officers, anyone can bring a complaint against each individual councillor to a body called the Standards Board, which in turn can refer it to the Adjudication Panel. (Thousands of complaints against councillors are brought to the Standards Board routinely, without any such previous drama. Presumably a complaint brought after councillors had defied the Officers would get further than most others do).

The Standards Board and the Adjudication Panel can fine, temporarily suspend, or disqualify councillors, but not surcharge or jail them, or send in “commissioners” to take over the council.

The Tory/Lib government has announced that it plans to replace the Standards Board regime by a different one, but it has not done that yet, and it is not clear that the different regime would reintroduce the more severe penalties.

For now, in short — unless some keen lawyer comes up with another, more obscure, legal path — councillors face smaller risks than in the 1980s or 1920s.

Local Labour Parties serious about fighting cuts do, however, need to identify “substitute” council candi-

dates who will stand in by-elections created if defiant councillors are disqualified.

WHOLE LABOUR MOVEMENT FIGHT

No Labour council today is offering even the general talk about defiance which was fairly commonplace in the early 1980s.

It is hard to find even individual left-wing Labour councillors bold enough to vote against cuts. For that matter, council unions are generally less defiant and demanding than they were in the early 1980s.

To do anything other than accept huge damage by Tory cuts, the whole labour movement has to reshape and reorient itself now. It won’t be Labour councils that lead that reorientation. But Labour and trade union activists need to start arguing now about what Labour councils can and should do as part of a developing militant anti-cuts movement.

The first argument is that council Labour groups should integrate themselves into local anti-cuts committees, and make their strategies and options a matter for democratic debate in the local labour movement, rather than “there is no alternative” announcements.

ITALY

Berlusconi, over and out?

BY HUGH EDWARDS

"If we want things to stay as they are things will have to change," says one of the protagonists in Giuseppe Lampedusa's novel about resistance to the Sicilian aristocracy against the forces of the bourgeois Risorgimento.

It is a cynical remark highly appropriate to events in Italy right now where with the defection of around 40 of his ruling party has left Silvio Berlusconi technically bereft of a majority and facing a vote of no-confidence on 14 December.

Unfortunately Berlusconi can take considerable reassurance from the fact that his government has so far gladdened the hearts of both his native bourgeoisie and the money-market people. He has overseen a successful onslaught on the jobs, wages and living conditions of millions of workers and their families — and without one serious blow being laid on him by either the official opposition parties in parliament or the trade union movement.

The political crisis stems from hostility between Berlusconi and the ex-number two in his party, the president of the Chamber, Gianfranco Fini. Fini is unhappy about the ever increasing electoral, political and ideological reliance by Berlusconi on Umberto Bossi's Northern League.

The government now finds himself compelled to establish a Federal Italy — the Northern League's defining point! This threatens the unravelling and break-up of the peninsula; but the centres of industry, banks and finance lie within the regions of the mythical "Padania" and the political grasp of Umberto Bossi.

Fini used to be a long-time dedicated fascist — "Mussolini was one of history's greatest statesmen!" He has reinvented himself as a man of the democratic centre and has used his position of Speaker to exploit the endless sexual scandals and gaffes of the premier — Berlusconi's desperate attempts to conjure up one anti-constitutional ruse after another to stay out of prison, unstoppable revelations about criminal

involvement with the mafia and corruption.

Ultimately Fini's decision to break with the ruling party testifies to his belief that among the most powerful centres of business, industry and finance, disquiet exists about the capacity, direction and potential consequences of the Berlusconi project.

Fini's new party, Future and Liberty, can be seen as a rallying call to the Italian bourgeoisie to prepare to rearm itself and regroup.

But Fini has no intention of acting too hastily, despite his threat a few weeks ago to vote against the government in a vote of no confidence if Berlusconi didn't resign. He is only too aware that in the electoral and parliamentary bear-pit in Italy, one step too far or too hasty could mean the end of a political career.

After a meeting with the President of the state — the ex-Stalinist Giorgio Napolitano — he agreed to suspend his motion until after Berlusconi's next slash-and-burn budget went successfully through parliament.

Fini also backed the draconian Education Bill now on its way. This while thousands of students, teachers and

Fini and Berlusconi, before they fell out

parents besiege parliament and occupy the historic and cultural monuments of the country.

Whatever political formation emerges from the cynical manoeuvring and horse trading in the days ahead — a government of "national salvation" uniting all the parties, with the blessing of the "communists" of the extra-parliamentary left, has been mooted — the perspective for the Italian workers are grim.

It is by no means a foregone conclusion that Berlusconi may lose any votes of confidence to come. Already the auction of votes is in full swing, a process that might well take on a special significance if the present protests against the Education Bill are successful.

Even the possibility of an eventual election victory for Berlusconi cannot be ruled out, so divided and demoralised are the Italian masses, (mis)represented as they are by a galaxy of centre-left and radical left windbags. Those windbags bear full responsibility for the political cul-de sac in Italy today.

• Italian students, see page 9

OPEN BORDERS

Remember Jimmy Mubenga!

One hundred and fifty people protested outside the Angolan Embassy on 12 November at the death of Jimmy Mubenga, who died whilst being forcibly deported back to Angola on a British Airways flight. Jimmy's family were amongst the protestors.

The Angolan Embassy has been silent since Jimmy's untimely death a month ago and the protestors handed in a letter to the Ambassador expressing their anger at this silence.

The protest then made its way to the Home Office Headquarters. In the course of the long walk these slogans were shouted: "No Borders! No Nations! Stop Deportations!" and "What do we want? Justice! Why do we want it? Jimmy Mubenga!"

At the Home Office we heard speeches from Jeremy Corbyn MP, Deborah Coles from Inquest, Emma Ginn from Medical Justice, the inspiring Adalberto Rosário de Miranda from the Union of Angolans UK, Ciaran O'Reilly who spoke about being deported from the United States, Ayo Omotade who told a horrific but eventually triumphant tale of his own experience on a BA flight, Dashty Jamal who spoke about forced deportations to Iraq, Guy Taylor, and many many more, especially from the Angolan community

in the UK — many pointing out the hypocrisies of international politics, with particular reference to the oil interests that Britain enjoys in Angola.

Tyneside backs refugees

Tyneside Community Action for Refugees campaigns for asylum seekers' rights and against racist policies which divide the working class. On 20 November TCAR organised around 150 people to a march against the Government's policy of detaining asylum seekers and refugees.

The march was joined by Congolese campaigners from Manchester who sang Congolese protest songs.

A few BNP supporters had set up a stall by the Monument in the city centre, as a counter protest to the demonstration but these five had no impact. Heavy rain forced the protest to adjourn to a local pub. At this point the EDL arrived.

However the demonstrators left the square unmolested, and gathered in the pub to hear speakers from the Harmondsworth support campaign and other groups campaigning against detention.

Karen

UK Border Agency tears lovers apart

On Monday 29 November, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers and migrant rights activists established a "temporary border" at the Home Office to test the language and citizenship knowledge of civil servants.

The action marked the day that the government has introduced a pre-entry language requirement for spouses of migrants from outside the EU. The legislation is not designed to help migrants integrate. Instead it serves to deter people from marrying a non EU partner, and will keep families apart.

Campaigners challenged passers-by to take part in the new English and Citizenship tests. Most were surprised by just how difficult the tests were.

This law will affect those from areas of the world where English classes are not available, or who can't afford to pay for such classes.

Along with the new cap on numbers of migrants, this law will ensure that few people other than the rich will be able to get into the UK.

Walk out on 9 December!

BY ED MALTBY

As we go to press we have heard that the Parliamentary vote on tuition fees will take place on Thursday 9 December. College and schools students should walk out.

We hope they will be joining a massive demonstration in central London. College staff should certainly join the students as they walk out and as they demonstrate.

Such action will follow on from Tuesday 30 November, when tens of thousands of students demonstrated, walked out and took direct action against the government education plans. Protesting against the tripling of tuition fees, scrapping of Education Maintenance Awards and cutting of the higher education teaching budget by 80%, they braved police brutality, heavy snow and repressive tactics from school managements.

At the time of writing, university occupations are ongoing or have recently taken place at Newcastle, Edinburgh, Sheffield, Nottingham, Oxford, School of Oriental and African Studies, Leeds, Manchester Metropolitan, London South Bank, University of the West of England, Bristol, Cambridge, Brighton, Falmouth, University College London, Royal Holloway and Cardiff.

The first lesson of Tuesday's protests is that the police can be beaten. A demonstration of around 5,000 students moved through central London, outmanoeuvring the police to avoid being kettled.

The march passed from Parliament square, down Piccadilly and Oxford Street, to Saint Paul's, with groups of demonstrators splitting off along the way.

The demonstration was able to beat the kettle through a combination of mobility and determination, breaking police lines before they were fully formed and about-facing rapidly; and the efforts of a team of volunteer stewards organised through the citywide London student general assembly.

When small groups of police entered the march and provoked fights with students by punching and insulting people, stewards stepped in to defuse punch-ups, stopping students from getting arrested and keeping the march from being stalled or slowed by brawls with individual policemen.

French students call this kind of demonstration a "wild demonstration" and it is an effective way of beating the police kettle. Student activists should review this tactic and work on ways to do it better next time.

The student movement is also learning how to link up its different components. University occupations are being used as an organising hub by students from other universities and local schools.

School students attended a workshop on organising at University College London on Monday 29 November, and some school students use other occupations as places to hold organising meetings.

Local trade unions spread information through the student movement via occupations and occupiers use the internet to disseminate news, slogans and information via twitter and facebook.

The more established occupations set up media teams who co-ordinate press releases and media strategy.

Higher education students should

Manchester 30 November

help school and college students by organising printing; sending students to help leaflet schools and colleges; and organising collections to help those who have lost their EMA through walking out. Supporting victimised school and college activists is also becoming important.

Despite trade union banners appearing on numerous protests, the student movement has yet to link up effectively with trade unions. A series of weekend actions called for 4, 5 and 11 December should provide an opportunity for students and workers to demonstrate together, but unity ultimately has to go beyond joint marches — students and trade unionists need to take direct action together. London students provided an example on Monday 29 November when they visited RMT picket lines with banners and cakes.

The student movement is likely to recede — the Christmas holidays are approaching, and it is possible that the bill on tuition fees will be passed by Parliament, especially if Liberal Democrat MPs choose to duck the fight in their party by abstaining rather than voting against.

We have to make sure that disorganisation and demoralisation caused by these things is kept to a minimum, and that the movement can bounce back quickly in January! The passing of the bill should not mean the end of the movement — student movements (like the CPE movement in France in 2006) won after the passing of the law they opposed by forcing its repeal. Students could also fight for non-compliance from local authorities and its repeal. In any case the movement needs to keep going fighting to stop the scrapping of EMA.

The movement needs to establish groups in every college that meet weekly, open to everyone who wants to get involved; they need to vote on what actions to take, decide political slogans and take minutes. They need to link up with other student groups around the city and have weekly joint meetings, to which local trade unions should also be invited.

Building up these democratic structures makes the student movement more durable and organised. And the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts is vital for the longer haul. If the student movement of the moment recedes, it will fall again to the NCAFC to help revive it next year: activist groups in colleges should affiliate to the NCAFC.

• NCAFC: www.anticuts.com

Newcastle occupiers protest

The protests will grow with or without Aaron Porter's support

BY ROWAN RHEINGANS

An average day in the occupation at Newcastle University begins early. First on the agenda of each general meeting are a selection of messages of solidarity.

We continue to be inundated with messages from local activists, teachers, parents, school students and academics, offering practical support and sharing advice from previous actions.

It was in such a meeting that we heard news of NUS president Aaron Porter's statement of support for the anti-cuts occupations that are ongoing in many of the country's universities and look likely to grow. A ripple of polite applause crept across our lecture theatre but in general the mood was indifferent. Compared with the times we've received emails from prominent political activists, promises of "dinner for all" from our lecturers, or words of congratulations from local people, it didn't seem to matter that much.

It is our occupation's atmosphere of radical, creative discussion and collective action that might explain why Porter's apology for "dithering" in recent weeks fell a little flat. On the second National Day of Action today, and after six nights, our occupation is stronger than ever.

Maintaining easy access in and out of the building has meant our space has been available for local sixth form and college students as well, providing a supportive environment for lecturers to have meetings about the cuts. We have organised our own daily educational programme, open to the public, as well as helping to allow scheduled classes to continue in our occupied space. Calls from local and national press are now almost as frequent as donations of food and blankets.

Another reason we were unmoved by Porter's statement was perhaps because his "U-turn" is a reflection of what we have experienced locally with our student representatives. They too have made new promises to support anti-cuts campaigns, but we have learned through six days of successful occupation that this support, though welcome, is not vital.

Like our sabbatical officers, Aaron Porter should support students engaged in peaceful direct action to defend their

education. It remains to be seen how his statements to this effect will impact on those in the student movement he labels "unrepresentative" because they venture beyond the NUS blueprint for fighting cuts.

The action of occupying a university is not merely to challenge university managements to come out against cuts, nor is it only to put pressure on the coalition to stop talking misleadingly about "togetherness" when it comes to education reforms. Occupations are not just a political tactic that the NUS supports or does not. To occupy a university space is to fundamentally question what education is for, how teaching and learning is organised, whose decisions are acted upon and how those decisions are made. We are challenging relationships taken for granted and stimulating ideas for different ways of organising society.

Aaron Porter should join this collective effort to re-imagine education. But this must mean he accepts what will sometimes be a muddled conversation about the way we organise and protest: we are learning a lot of this as we go along.

We have not forgotten Porter's initial statements following the protests at Millbank. His condemning of "violence", without distinguishing between people and windows, felt like a lazy dismissal of radicalism full stop. The student movement needs a fighting union which can be relied upon to support and educate its members about taking all actions against cuts.

Porter's recent statements reflect his response to the strength of the growing grassroots student movement. This is an encouraging reflection of our collective political potential to suggest alternatives for education and necessarily perhaps for student representation.

This movement is bigger than Aaron Porter. It is bigger than the universities, and bigger than the project of an occupied lecture theatre. In the north-east, the impetus for actions so far has come primarily from school and college students. This energy is in turn spreading across the wider community. This fight-back will continue with or without Aaron Porter's support.

It is simply too serious now to dwell for any length of time on what could be more empty promises. We are busy organising, occupying and reimagining what we want education to be. In short, we have got more pressing things to do.

SUBJECT HEADING

Open the doors and your books!

BY JOE BROADY, MANCHESTER

At 4 pm on 24 November activists entered and occupied the Roscoe Building of Manchester University in opposition to proposed education cuts and fee rises.

After discussion the group decided that the occupation would be used as a base for planning and organisation for the Manchester anti-cuts movement.

This initial group of occupiers was denied food, heating, and, unlike every other university occupation in the country, free access to the building.

The group after talks released this set of demands:

- The University to pledge not to

increase fees and not to implement cuts

- To issue a statement issued saying the University is opposed to increased fees and cuts

- No victimisation of students involved here, at Millbank or any other protests

- Protection of university staff in danger of forced "voluntary redundancy"

- Open the finance books on cuts and fees

- An open door policy for the occupation

- A call for more protest action, including strikes and occupations nationally from students and workers alike.

The Friday after the occupation began saw an open school day, with lectures and open seminars run on the economic

crisis, the modern trend of neo-liberalism, and the tactics of the student movement as a whole.

The group, now larger in numbers, benefitted from video calls from fellow occupiers across the country including Brighton, Cambridge and Leeds. As well as receiving support from the national UCU delegation, Unite, and individuals such as Billy Bragg, Aaron Porter, Arthur Scargill and even American leftist author Noam Chomsky.

During the weekend the building was completely closed off, which meant that the group could not leave for fear of losing numbers and the occupation. This also meant that no deliveries of food could be made, so the occupiers held out on food that had been delivered to them

during normal lecture times.

The following Monday saw a return of many people to the space, talks and meetings were held for the majority of the day. The group, who had previously allowed lectures to go on as normal in the occupation, tried to keep the room free of classes, in an effort to organise. However, management threatened legal action, and the group decided to allow students to attend lectures.

Despite this the group heard a speech from Colin Barker a 1968 occupation veteran and held a large meeting in which the group planned for the second national day of action.

"Turn the occupations outwards"

BY JONNY KEYWORD, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD OCCUPIER AND AWL MEMBER

We had a short-lived occupation which we launched off the back of the day of action on 24 November, but it was not well organised and ended quickly. After a relatively successful demonstration outside Nick Clegg's office on 30 November, we wanted to reoccupy and took a space in the Richard Roberts Building. The space isn't ideal; it's essentially underground with limited visibility.

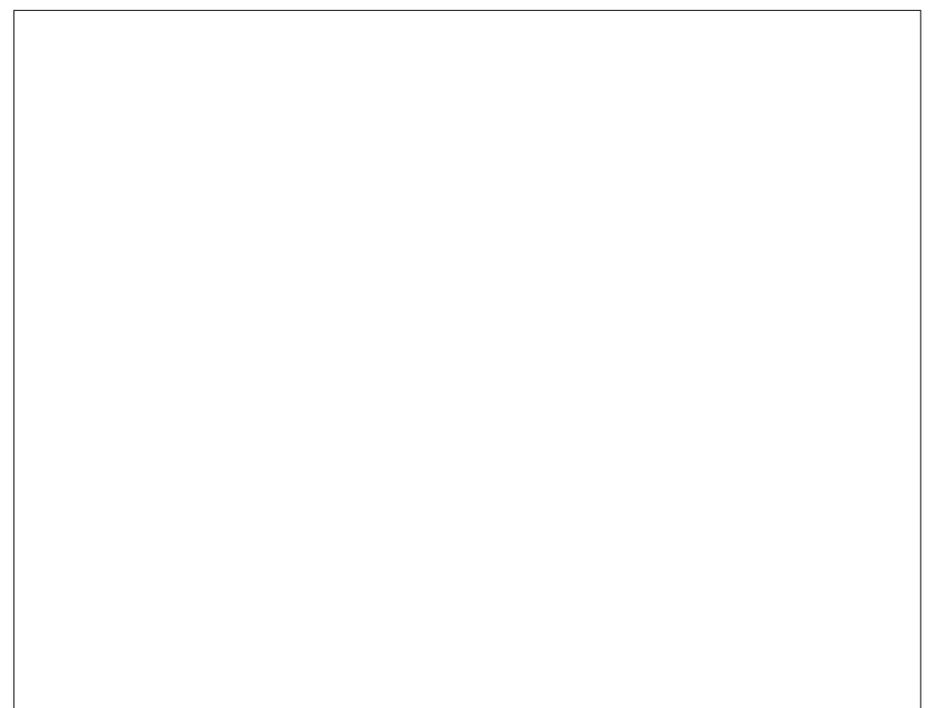
In negotiations with security, they offered us control of the lecture theatres in the Hicks Building that we'd been occupying last week. They said we could control who came and went during the day as long as they were Sheffield students. That would have allowed us more visibility and increase accessibility, but people felt they couldn't trust the security after what had happened to our last occupation so the majority voted to stay in Richard Roberts. The police arrived at about 9pm and locked one of the doors, but we managed to keep one more open so we have some limited access into and

out of the space, but we're basically clinging onto it at the moment.

We're starting to get meetings set up, including general meetings and educational discussions. The idea is to use the occupied space for political discussion and education.

The security are obviously very unhappy. They submitted a list of demands to us when we occupied and said they would feel justified in using any means possible to remove us if we failed to meet them. We've done that just by staying in Richard Roberts so it's not clear how long the current uneasy truce will last.

People are coming and going but the core group is around 50 at the moment, rising to about 70. The danger is that people will drift off if things reach a stalemate so we need new energy. Myself and others are trying to do that by linking up with trade unions, such as the UCU locally with whom we hope to hold joint meetings inside the occupied space. My concern at every point has been thinking about how to turn the occupation outwards and draw in more people; we need to use this occupation to build something ongoing, not just create an underground compound for existing activists!



The occupation at UCL has been one of the most high-profile and prominent of the recent movement. Involving significant numbers of students, it succeeded in bringing senior college boss Rex Knight to an open negotiation where he was questioned publicly by occupiers. A number of media personalities, including Billy Bragg and Mark Thomas, have visited the occupation. The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts has held press conferences in the space, and AWL member and RMT rep Becky Crocker spoke at a meeting there before the latest tube strike. A delegation of UCL occupiers visited the RMT/TSSA picket line at Euston station. At the time of writing, security had increased their pressure on the occupiers leading to a possible threat of eviction. More info: ucloccupation.com.

AWL news: help us this December!



December will be busy. Despite the snow, students are keeping up a level of activity on the streets not usually seen at this time of year.

It will be doubly busy for members and friends of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Alongside student and other activity, including in the later part of the month when student activity is likely to subside a bit with the end of term, we have three campaigns which must be completed this month.

We have to raise a lot of money to finance moving offices and launching Solidarity on a weekly schedule in place of our present fortnightly routine.

Phone-rounds and mailings from the AWL office have got a good response, but we need to follow by local AWL

activists everywhere organising face-to-face discussions with friends and contacts in their area (including "long-lost" contacts who may be coming back into activity as struggles warm up, or may at least see more need to help socialist activity financially).

In every area, we need to get a speedier and more reliable routine for the distribution of *Solidarity*. For most AWL branches, that means shifting the branch meeting night to Thursday, or organising an extra regular get-together (paper sale, stall, attendance at a local campaign meeting) for Thursdays, and enlisting someone to drive round papers to everyone not present at the Thursday gathering.

Delays that were tolerable with a fortnightly routine will become unafford-

able with a weekly schedule.

Our third "campaign" this month is a "backroom" one, but still important. It is the "campaign" to get our office files and equipment in shape for moving offices, and then to move them and install them in our new place.

Struggles and campaigns cannot function without information and explanation. Information and explanation cannot circulate without papers, leaflets, meetings, phone calls, websites, emails... And those, in turn, cannot circulate without adequately-equipped offices where people can get them out.

Our present offices hold files and stocks accumulated over 14 years in the basement of our previous premises, plus another 25 years' accumulation at our current address. Since the office is a

working office, not a library or archive, much of the stuff not in everyday use is stacked in corners and crannies.

Getting it all in shape for the move will be a big job, and a costly one, but a vital one if AWL is to be in shape for the struggles of 2011.

If you value the information and ideas brought to you by Solidarity, please help us with a donation.

Send a cheque payable to AWL to us at P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Or see <http://www.workersliberty.org/donate>

In the last fortnight we have received £772 in donations and new standing orders. Thanks to Lynn, Leon, Nick B, Carol, Stan, Harry, Joe B and a donor from Australia who asked to remain anonymous. Our fundraising total now stand at £18,897.

UNITED STATES

The shape of things to come?

BY WES STRONG (MEMBER OF THE US REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST GROUP SOLIDARITY)

An overwhelming shift in public education has been occurring for thirty years, going back to the birth of neo-liberalism.

A huge power shift has taken place where the private sector has an ever-growing influence on public education. Public education at the university level has historically been state funded, a burden shared by both individual states and the federal government.

Each different state raises internal funds differently, and the federal government has supplies federal funding as well. State law in every state except Vermont forbids states from passing a budget that runs at a deficit, so they are reliant on federal intervention in tough economic times. Of course, states could change these laws, but have no desire to do so as the majority of them receive money from the private sector and subsequently serve private-sector interests.

Public education has been underfunded at the state and federal level for decades. Students and contingent workers as well have been forced to cover the difference with increasing tuition and fees. At my alma mater, tuition increased 50% from when I enrolled until I graduated (when taken cumulatively). This is commonplace throughout the country.

The disappearance of public funds has been subsidized by private interests who invest in certain programs or provide financing via grant programs. These companies often use this financing to create a wedge into the public institution and gain more influence. So, for instance, at UC Berkeley, BP has financed and runs an entire lab committed to cli-

mate science that is completely secret.

Students often have several different fees to pay. Each university or system determines their own fees structure. This is often decided by a Board of Trustees (BoT).

BoTs are becoming more composed of private sector actors, business owners, former CEOs, and the like. They don't fight for students or workers and promote the same neo-liberal strategy carries by the larger private sector. When cuts come down they accept them as inevitable (like the well trained bureaucrats they are) and refuse to shake the cages of their bosses to fight for more funding. They then implement more "inevitable" cuts and fee hikes.

Student aid in the forms of grants and loans are legislated and regulated by the government. Recently, we have seen more grants and loans go to those attending private schools than those attending public [state] schools — according to a source of mine in the AAUP (university professor union). You lose student aid if you are convicted of a misdemeanour drug charge (as simple as carrying a joint), and there are many other ways they try to make sure they don't pay out aid.

There are also private loans, which are almost all unsubsidised. This means interest accrues while you are at school. Many federal loans are subsidized and do not accrue interest.

Either way, student debt is *way* up over the past 20 years, and the roads out of debt are paved with a decade of wage slavery. Though the government recently passed a law that erases student debt after 10 years, in order to not be forced to pay, you have to earn well below the poverty line. This is becoming more of a possibility for many youth, especially as jobs continue to disappear and prospects

In the hands of business. UC Berkeley, where an entire climate change lab is secret

are even slimmer (unless you want to go back for a higher degree and take on more debt). The future looks pretty bleak for youth, whether you go to college/university or not.

Given the much larger geographical landscape, and the fact that the cuts have yet to hit the US in the ways they have in Europe (at least in immediate and drastic terms, aside from a few places) the national struggle around public education is still very much in development.

There is no single national student formation that can or does claim lead on the issue. There are several groups involved in various ways and levels; the formation I have been working with is a loose coalition of members of various different organizations who operates on an ad hoc basis and runs the following website: defendpubliceducation.org.

As socialists, we must continue to play the role that we always have, being the

best organisers — and also make sure that people understand that we aren't just out here because we think we have the best political line or because we want to sell our papers, but because we genuinely and sincerely care about the individual lives of each person we talk too.

Here in the states, the left often ignores this core concept to organising and ends up alienating people who would otherwise struggle with us because we don't listen to them and try to tell them how things should be. We can't rely on the infallibility of our expert political lines (though I know we have the most developed political discussion) and must be willing to let movements make mistakes while maintaining our commitment to the struggle.

• This article is extracted from a longer interview, which can be read in full on www.workersliberty.org

ITALY

50,000 students march in Rome

BY CATH FLETCHER

The Italian government has succeeded in passing its so-called "reform" of universities despite massive student protests (30 November).

But as the measure now goes to the Senate, this is not the end of the campaign.

In Rome, a massive sit-in outside the parliament building was met with such heavy policing that the leader of Italy's most prominent left party compared it to Pinochet's Chile.

Over fifty thousand students demonstrated in the capital. Some blocked railway lines out of Rome for several hours, as did students in Pisa. Elsewhere in the country small station occupations disrupted hundreds of train services. In Turin the ring-road was occupied for two and a half hours, in Bologna a motorway was occupied and in Lecce students took over the city's Roman amphitheatre.

Many universities also saw local occupations: in Bari the politics and law faculty was taken over by three hundred students. A group of Italian Erasmus stu-

dents in Paris hung a protest banner from the Arc de Triomphe.

These latest protests follow a day of demonstrations last week, including occupations of the Colosseum and the leaning tower of Pisa.

The Gelmini "reform", named for the education minister responsible, is accompanied by huge cuts to university funding. The official figures put these at €276m, but the education union CGIL reckons the real impact will be closer to €1.1bn. Private universities — among them those run by the Catholic church — are the exception. Plans to cut their funding were overturned, and instead they're getting an extra €25m from the state.

This is despite the fact that private colleges charge significantly higher fees, making them inaccessible to many students. In Milan, for example, the Catholic University, whose principal is a leading spokesman for the private institutions, charges even its poorest students (fees are means-tested) on its cheapest courses €2400 a year. So no surprise that students protesting in Milan launched eggs and firecrackers at it as they marched past!

Although there is no doubt that Italian

universities need reform — not least a crackdown on the notorious patronage system that dominates university appointments — the Gelmini plan represents a fundamental attack on the public education system.

It will allow external representatives on governing bodies (for which read bankers/businessmen/ Berlusconi's cronies: there is no requirement that they be elected). It will give a funding premium to "top" universities at the expense of others and introduce performance-related pay for professors and researchers. And it will still leave most entrants to lecturing roles on temporary contracts for fifteen years!

While the reform has yet to be enforced, in practice the accompanying cuts are already biting. New restrictions have been placed on student numbers, especially for prestigious courses like medicine, law and engineering. Recruitment is at a virtual standstill and university canteens — traditionally a source of cheap or even free lunches for students, compensating for minimal bursary provision — have been forced to raise prices.

DEBATE

Is “Zero-Growth” the answer to climate change?

BY STUART JORDAN

In a recent speech to the Texas Academy of Science, world renowned ecologist Dr Eric Pianka called for the genocidal culling of 90% of humanity through release of an airborne Ebola virus. Pianka explained that such radical measures were the only way to stop environmental catastrophe. At the end of his speech, the two or three hundred scientists present gave him a standing ovation.

Pianka is obviously an extreme case, but there are softer variations on this theme of “population control”. From David Attenborough to David Rockefeller, the theme is becoming a mainstream response to climate change.

Advocates claim the world’s population is unsustainable and needs to be reduced. They say “we need three planets to sustain this level of consumption”. This logic also flows into more sophisticated arguments for “negative” or “zero economic growth”, which have recently been raised by the “ecosocialists” in the British Section of the Fourth International.

Behind the zero or negative growth arguments is an understandable anti-capitalist belief that unending economic growth is incompatible with environmental sustainability. This is a common sense. But I will argue that if there is a natural limit to growth then we are far from reaching it. Instead, it is *capitalist growth*, rather than growth per se, that has caused the environmental crisis.

Capitalism is the most dynamic and productive economic system in human history. Human activity has never before been organised on such a vast scale — we can rearrange the elements of nature to create vast cities, global communications networks and the technology to leave the planet and fly to the moon.

Advocates of zero growth argue that this level of activity alone has created ecological imbalance. They believe the earth’s ecology could tolerate humanity in pre-capitalist times when we lived as isolated communities scratching around with primitive tools. But now we are organised in global production lines wielding modern machinery, Mother Nature is unable to sustain us and is in effect fighting back. There is a belief that we need to return to lower levels of productivity, below an unspecified threshold, where we will live in poverty but in harmony with nature.

The zero growth argument states that you cannot have unending growth in a finite world. This is true up to a point. If the earth’s population was so large that we ran out of arable land to provide food for everyone then we would have exceeded a natural limit. But modern famines are not caused by lack of food: they are caused by lack of money.

FINITE RESOURCES?

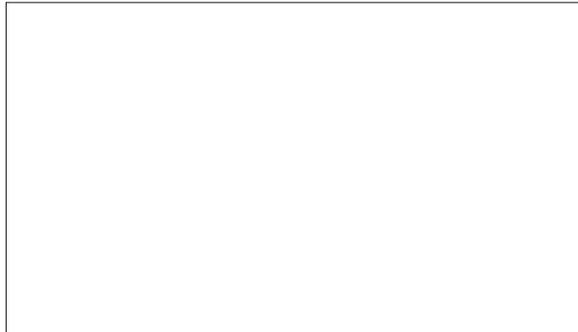
We often talk about the resources in the world “running out”, but what does that actually mean?

Two hundred years ago, when capitalism was in its infancy, our ancestors found a world where the earth’s resources were largely untouched by human hand — virgin forests, enormous seams of rocks, minerals and fossil fuels beneath earth’s surface. Capitalism has organised human activity to transform these easily accessible resources into useful things.

By using our arms and legs, head and hands, we have ripped out enormous quantities of rock, minerals and metals. We have processed these natural resources, transformed them into machines powered by other natural resources (coal, oil and gas) and created modern civilisation. Over the years, these materials have travelled through multiple processes of production and consumption. Our activity has stirred up the elements of the earth.

But this activity has not exhausted these natural resources. The constituent elements still exist. Instead, they have become more difficult to find, harder to extract or lie wasted in useless form.

Instead of abundant resources concentrated in geographical locations, we now have an assortment of metal, plastic, rock and decaying organic matter scattered across the globe, in landfill, polluting our air and water systems.



Production, as it is organised under capitalism, causes waste and ecological damage

It will take a lot of energy and work to transform these waste materials into useful products. This is especially alarming given that our traditional energy source, the carbon that once existed underneath the earth’s surface, is running out.

Moreover, our activity has transformed this carbon so it now exists as gas in the earth’s stratosphere, creating climate change. Has this happened simply because human beings are naturally parasitical and wasteful? Or is there a different explanation?

CAPITALISM

Capitalism produces things to sell on the market. These things roughly fulfil a human need of one sort or another. This could be a survival need such as food or it could be a socially constructed need, like the high definition TV.

The majority of the population do not choose what is on the market in the first place — we do not choose what we produce and by extension, we do not choose the world we live in.

As the commodities are exchanged some people accumulate money. As the system develops control of production is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Fewer and fewer people can afford the time, machines or land to provide for their own basic needs. Eventually our needs can only be satisfied by going to the marketplace. We can only access the world through the exchange of cash sums. To get hold of cash, the majority of us, without access to tools, land or machines, sell the only thing we have left — our time and skills as workers.

We sell the hours and days of our lives. Once sold, this time belongs to our boss and they set us to work on a production process. Bosses are only interested in making profit and to this end they try to make us work harder and longer for less money.

By organising human activity in this way, the resources of the earth are transformed by human labour for the sole purpose of increasing sales on the market place. This has several strange consequences.

The market develops a life of its own, directing the course of human civilisation. As technologies develop, the world changes around us. This process creates new needs. For example, the invention of the car and the ability to mass produce it created the market for cars.

This in turn creates a world built around the car — a modern road network, an urban environment of carparks, out-of-town shopping centres and industrial parks, the dispersal of family units etc. In such a world it is almost necessary to have a car to get to work, to access the shops and to travel to see friends. None of this was planned. There was no need for a car before it was invented; the need was created by the market.

From a capitalist point of view, the consuming mass of humanity is simply a mouth and anus. Everytime they feed the mouth they make money. The waste product that comes out the other end is not their business. The quicker we consume our products the sooner we return to the marketplace for a replacement. The human being is nothing but a consumer, the end point of the world’s production processes.

The earth’s finite resources once found in pristine state have been passed through a process of consumption till now they lie in useless form polluting the environment. For the zero growth and population control advocates, this is a natural state of humanity. But it is not natural. It is “man made”.

NOT JUST CONSUMERS

What is missing from this picture of humanity, what some see as natural, is that we are not simply consumers. We are also workers. When we are at work our time belongs to our boss and we have to follow her/his orders. Outside of work life begins, we have freedom to do what we want, but that is limited. We can only access the world as it is available on the market place and we can only buy what we can afford.

Ultimately, human activity is nothing but the constant production and reproduction of human civilisation. With every interaction with the world, we are changing the nature around us and in the process changing ourselves. The problem is that our most important activity, our *work*, is controlled by a hostile force only interested in profit.

Capitalism takes the easiest route to make profit. As long as there are still easily accessible resources under the earth’s surface, capitalists will continue to set people to work on it. They will exploit these resources until they are no longer economical and then will turn elsewhere. The plundering of the earth’s resources and the creation of waste is a peculiar feature of capitalism.

The decisions about how we use our productive energy and transform the world are too important to be left to a few unaccountable individuals. Their right to control production is dependent on our cooperation. We should reject this right and fight for an economy under democratic workers’ control. Workers’ control would mean our collective work could be organised on the basis of human needs and the needs of our environment.

A society organised on the basis of participative democracy in economic decisions is the only society that could deal with the economic crisis. It could implement a system of recycling where the useless remains of our consumption go back into a production process to be transformed and made useful again by human labour.

Productive activity could become an active intervention into the earth’s ecological processes, transforming the world for human need and actively extracting and reprocessing waste. We could continue with high levels of productivity to create and transform the world.

Such a society would be able to make decisions about whether or not a particular product was ecologically viable. For instance, it is unlikely that we would choose to produce unrecyclable plastics. The key ecological determinants of what can be produced will be time, energy and scientific knowledge.

There is ample energy from the sun that could be tapped without any detrimental ecological effects. Social relations between human beings are a far greater barrier than technology for creating a viable renewable energy.

The Vestas wind turbine manufacturers demonstrated this when they closed down the Isle of Wight plant in 2009 arguing (correctly) there was no market for their product (in one of the windiest parts of the world!).

On a geopolitical scale, it is impossible to imagine the Saharan desert being utilised for solar energy given the parasitic imperialist projects of the US, China and Europe in the region.

An ecological future does not require a reduction in population or a return to productivity levels of pre-capitalist times. Humanity is not a parasite living on the earth but a part of nature. Capitalism long ago developed the productive powers so an individual could produce much more than was needed for her/his survival.

The more people available for work: the greater the forces of our productive power and the more we can achieve. The problem is that without democratic control over our world, these productive forces are directed in wholly destructive ways.

The struggle to claim democratic control over our working lives is simultaneously the struggle to recreate a world based on solidarity and internationalism. It can only be achieved by an international working class movement organising for power.

INEQUALITY

“There is another way”

Bill Kerry, founder-member, current secretary and one of four co-directors of the Equality Trust, spoke to *Solidarity* about the Con Dem cuts. The Equality Trust is a group of academics and writers including the authors of the book *The Spirit Level*, which showed with detailed statistics that “more equal societies almost always do better.”

The fact that the deficit is being addressed overwhelmingly by cuts to public spending and very little by tax rises on the better off can only mean that inequality will increase.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said the impact will clearly be regressive. The government has contested their assessment, but its only hope seems to be that the private sector will step forward to rescue the economy. I’m not sure how it can do that when the incomes of the poorest third to a half of the population will be reduced — where will the demand for goods and services come from? I think the big fear is that we will just follow the Irish path, which appears to be an ever downward spiral of economic contraction and associated despair.

Beyond the obvious, do you think there’ll be more pervasive and profound impacts on social inequality in the UK?

I fear that as inequality rises and social cohesion is placed under strain we will see a steadily hardening attitude from government and certain sections of the media. Our huge gap between rich and poor will be portrayed even more as somehow “natural” and a result of people just “not trying hard enough” to find work or, rather, price themselves into work.

So although I think inequality will worsen and become further entrenched under the cuts programme, perhaps the main pervasive change will be in the intensity and volume of arguments used to justify it. Some arguments will be harsh, some will be more sophisticated. Inequality may be recognised as a problem, but then the solution will be more and more desperate pleading for social mobility as the way out.

This is very much Nick Clegg’s line of argument at the moment. The problem is, of course, more unequal societies such as the UK are less socially mobile. In the latest edition of *The Spirit Level* there is further evidence of this in the new final chapter.

Some of the Trust’s work has focused on the psychological impact of inequality; how will the austerity measures (e.g. charging £9,000 a year for higher education) affect what we might call “the psychology of class” in the UK? Are people more likely to see social inequality as something that’s set in stone?

That is a worry. The education cuts and the associated restricted access for people from poorer back-

grounds can only give rise to an idea, or a belief, that “higher education is not for the likes of us” and more and more young people from poorer and middle-income backgrounds will be restricted in terms of where they live, who they meet and what chances they have in life.

Those richer students who do manage to go into higher education are also less and less likely to mingle with anyone who isn’t also similarly well off. They too will be cut off from society in its broadest sense and be removed from the concerns of poorer people.

These sorts of social distances, which are already wide in the UK, can surely only get worse under the current education proposals, leading to higher levels of mistrust, anxiety and often poorer mental and physical health.

This in turns feeds into reduced social cohesion which can be characterised by a lack of kindness and fellow-feeling at one end of the spectrum and outright violence at the other. I think there is already a fairly well-developed sense of hopelessness and despair here in the UK — a feeling that nothing will change for the better, that our high level of inequality and related social problems cannot be fixed. At the moment, I can only see that feeling becoming more deep-rooted and more widespread as the cuts are rolled out.

What can people do to respond?

I think we need the broadest possible coalition of forces against the cuts themselves but also, crucially,

Cuts happen, inequality rises. None of this is inevitable.

against the logic of the cuts. The deficit actually presents an opportunity to argue for a more equal society, in that we can close the deficit by tax rises on the better off rather than imposing spending cuts on the poor. The Green New Deal group estimates that more than £100 billion a year is lost to tax evasion, tax avoidance and the non-collection of taxes already agreed. We do not have a spending problem. We have a revenue problem. This point needs to be made again and again.

I think the best chance of success is if the response to the cuts is as broadly based as possible. It needs to be an alliance of community and third sector groups, individuals, trade unions, local councils, faith groups and political organisations. It needs to range from disaffected Conservative and Lib Dem voters on the right and centre all the way through to those to the left of Labour.

I think the trade union movement can play a vital role here with their resources but they need to work (and be seen to be working) as part of this broader movement and not just on behalf of their members.

Finally, although things are very gloomy at the moment, I think people should not despair or give up hope. The economic crisis and the cuts are producing counter-narratives, ones that are more hopeful. I hope people see The Equality Trust as part of this. We aim to show that we can regain the idea of “The Good Society” and that our problems can be fixed by taking action to make our society more equal. There is another way.

• www.equalitytrust.org.uk

WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

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

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade

unions, supporting workers’ struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers’ charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers’ movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Black and white workers’ unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than

with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.

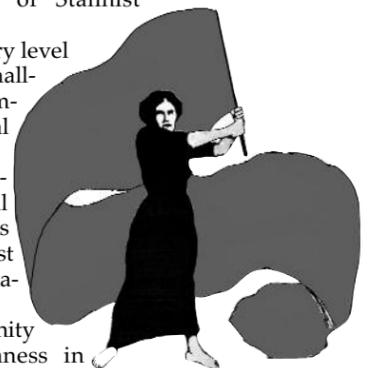
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.

- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.

- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

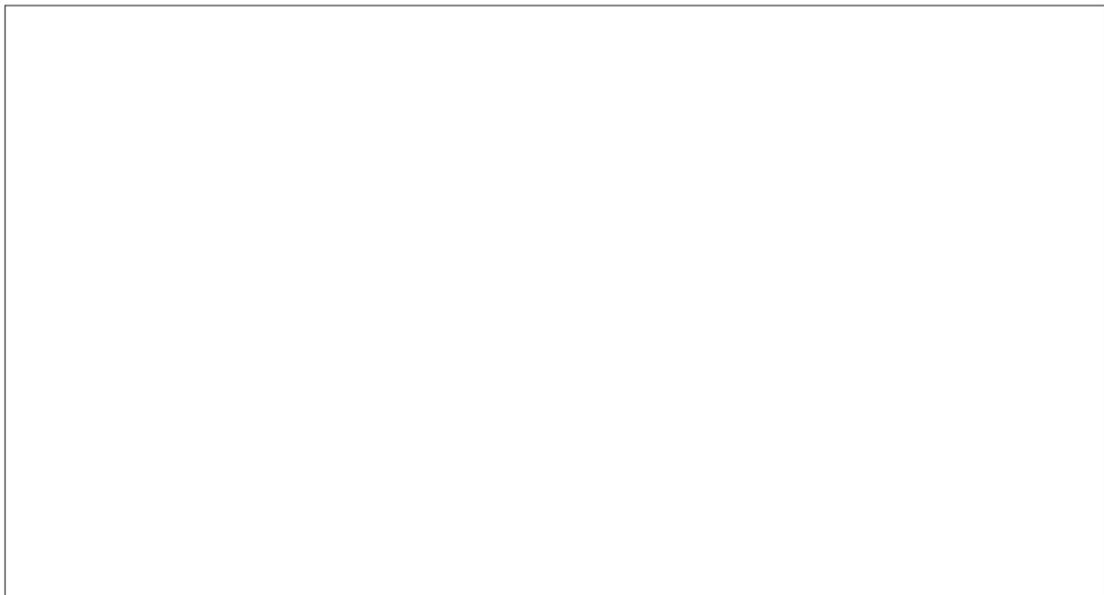
If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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WORKERS' LIBERTY & SOLIDARITY



General strike against austerity measures: Portugal, 24 November

AGAINST THE EURO-BANKERS' PLANS'

BUILD EUROPEAN WORKERS' UNITY!

BY DARREN BEDFORD

The bosses and bankers of Europe have been busily discussing a coordinated response to the debt crises that have shaken Ireland, Greece, Portugal and other countries within the "Eurozone."

They are discussing united responses across the continent to defend the interests of their class. Our class needs to do likewise.

There have been significant strike movements across Europe recently; the Greek strikes, the recent Portuguese general strike and the French strike wave are the most prominent. But these strikes have all been called on a national basis with little or no attempts at coordination.

Some workers in Belgium took strike action in

solidarity with the French movement but such examples have been rare. The European day of action called by the ETUC on 29 September was a one-day protest action and was almost ignored in Britain.

The stakes are far too high for this kind of disunity. The crisis is beyond national, the bosses' response is beyond national, our response must be beyond national too.

It is now not uncommon to hear rhetoric about the need for continent-wide action from labour movement leaders in Britain. If they genuinely mean those words, they should fight not only for coordinated action but for the political programme implied by that action — not British withdrawal from the EU, not the break-up of the EU, but smashing "through" the EU to European workers' unity and, ultimately, a united workers' states of Europe.

NEW IMMIGRATION RULES

Only the rich need apply!

BY IRA BERKOVIC

The government has wasted no time in tightening up Britain's immigration laws, which were already vice-like under New Labour.

But restrictions don't apply to everyone. If you need join your partner but can't afford English lessons to pass the pre-entry English test, tough. On the other hand, as Home Office lawyer Kamal Rahman has just announced, anyone planning to invest over £5 million in the UK will be eligible for citizenship within five years. No questions asked. No tests.

Rahman said, "This is a way to attract high net worth individuals in a time of austerity", and said that people would be given preferential treatment depending on the area of the economy in which they planned to invest.

In other words, the Tories want you out if you're a child (particularly an Afghani child) or poor; but you will be welcomed with open arms if you're rich.

If the government wanted a quick and easy way of raising funds there are plenty of tax loopholes it could close and plenty of tax dodgers, like Vodafone and Philip Green, it could tax.

This policy, like Tory policies on housing and education, is about social engineering on a grand scale — setting restrictions and controls in place to remake Britain in their own image; the image of the super-rich. The poor within our own society are to be swept under the rug (shunted out of inner cities and excluded from higher education), and poor migrants and asylum seekers are to be thrown out or turned away in greater numbers than ever before.

As we fight for top-quality public services for all, not just the rich, we should also fight for free movement. The only requirement necessary to live in Britain should not be your age, your wealth or your language skills but simply whether you want to live here. Scrap immigration controls! For open borders! No-one is illegal!

Individuals: £18 (22 issues) waged, £9 unwaged; or £35 (44 issues) waged, £17 unwaged. Trial sub: £5 for six issues. European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) or 50 euros (44 issues).

PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA, cheques (£) to "Solidarity". Or make £ or euro payments at workersliberty.org/subs

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