

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



No 245 9 May 30p/80p

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For a workers' government

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Make 10 May a new start, not a swansong

RELAUNCH

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QUICK, TARGETED STRIKES CAN WIN

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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.

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

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Quebec: three months of student strike

By Hugo Pouliot

On 13 February 2012 an indefinite student general strike in Quebec against an increase in tuition fees began. This now involves nearly 200,000 students from universities and CEGEP ("collège d'études générales et professionnelles", an intermediary level of education between secondary school and university).

A fee rise of \$1,625 over five years is planned — a phenomenal increase on the current \$2168 per year. The stated intention is to raise fees to the Canadian average of \$4,000 per year. Quebec currently has the lowest tuition fees in North America.

The fee hike was part of the Liberal government's 2010 budget which included measures aimed at destroying, step-by-step the social conquests of the Quebecois working class, such as increases in charges for electricity, and a health tax of \$200 per person, irrespective of their income.

The student movement has developed rapidly with demonstrations growing in size, some of which ended in confrontation with the police.

On 7 March one student,

Francis Grenier, nearly lost the use of his eye. Students and supporters were enraged and the movement was galvanised.

On Sunday 18 March I attended a family demonstration with 30,000 people in Montreal. Thousands of others marched in Quebec and Sherbrooke.

On 22 March more than 200,000 participated in a national demonstration in Montreal — one of the biggest political demonstrations in the history of Quebec and even of Canada!

SPRING

14 April saw the "Quebec Spring" demonstration.

There were then a succession of demonstrations and diverse actions: blockades of bridges, roads, occupations of ministries, and so on.

On 26 April a demonstration which I was part of was declared "illegal" by Montreal police. Nevertheless thousands continued their march, braving the orders of the police and winning an important symbolic victory.

The government turns a deaf ear to student demands and projects demagogic, profoundly dishonest propaganda about students who do not want to make their "fair

contribution" to save the education system and rebalance public finances! This is revolting, coming from a government which has had many scandals and does not hesitate to lavish gifts upon big businesses, while imposing austerity measures on the working class!

In Quebec the struggle for access to education has always been an integral part of the struggle against national oppression — e.g. during the "Peaceful Revolution" of the 1960s which saw the modernisation of Quebecois society. The under-education of the French-Canadian people allowed Anglo-Saxon capitalists to create an easily-exploited reserve of cheap labour.

To conserve social peace the Quebecois political class, from the the nationalist Parti Québécois to the federalist Parti Libéral, kept university tuition fees frozen between 1994 and 2007 and before that, from the 1960s until 1990. With economic crisis, the liberal government has decided to go onto the offensive.

The two principal left-wing parties in Quebec, Québec Solidaire and the new independence party Option Nationale, gave their support to the student struggle and are in favour

of free education from nursery to university.

This demand is defended vigorously by ASSE (Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante), a combative student union which is in large part the instigator of the current strike movement. In order to unify the the student movement ASSE has set up CLASSE (Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante — broad coalition of ASSE.)

Free education at all levels is a fundamental demand for every socialist and democrat. Under socialism, the right to accessible and free education will be guaranteed to allow everyone to learn in a manner convenient to them and to constantly perfect their knowledge and skills.

The struggle of the Quebecois students is an integral part of the struggle for social justice and for the creation of an alternative to the cuts agenda and austerity budget imposed by the bosses and their political parties.

• Demonstrate outside the Canadian High Commission to denounce police attacks on Quebecois students! 5.30-7pm 16 May, Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London.

Syria "Peace Plan" — a cover for murder and torture

By Dan Katz

On 3 May a spokesperson for Kofi Annan, broker of the 12 April Syria peace plan, claimed, "The Annan plan is on track... [although] there are no big signs of compliance on the ground."

Annan's six-point plan includes a ceasefire, deployment of observers and free access for journalists and humanitarian aid. The number of UN observer personnel has risen to 70, with 300 expected by the end of May.

But at the same time that Annan's assistant was speaking to the press, security forces and pro-government thugs were attacking anti-regime protesters at Aleppo university, killing four and detaining 200.

On 4 May at least ten more civilians were killed across Syria. State terror continues in Idlib province, in north west Syria, where the opposition Free Syrian Army has been routed and loyal troops are rounding up "oppositionists" in towns and country villages.

In fact Kofi Annan's

main achievement is to have taken Syria out of western news programmes. The main beneficiary of the ceasefire has been Bashar Assad and his one party state.

On Monday 7 May Assad staged a fake election with the aim of persuading the gullible that he intends real reform. The election was boycotted by the main opposition groups, and the BBC quoted a student in Damascus as saying "the polling stations are empty."

INCONCEIVABLE
Although the opposition — in particular the armed opposition — has taken a battering in the last two months it is now inconceivable that simple, brutal repression will work for Assad.

The Free Syrian Army has large organisations in many Syrian towns and, for example, was capable of killing 20 soldiers in a series of attacks on 2 May.

Meanwhile, the economy continues to deteriorate, shrinking by 3.4% in 2011, and forecast to contract by a further 5.9% in 2012.

The Syrian pound has

lost half of its value, falling to 100 to the US dollar (compared with 48 when the uprising began). The Central Bank's reserves have fallen from \$22 billion at the beginning of the crisis to about \$10 billion today.

The price of rice and eggs has tripled over the past year and cooking oil has doubled. Blackouts hit even middle class neighbourhoods not involved in the struggle for up to 12 hours a day.

The regime is hemmed in by sanctions. The EU's decision to stop importing Syrian crude oil has so far cost the state \$3 billion in revenue.

Muhanad, from the Sunni capitalist class in Aleppo, put the matter quite clearly: "The business class supported President Assad for maintaining the country's economic, political and social stability. But if these are gone, why should we support a president who wants taxes but offers nothing in return, not even protecting the national currency?"

EDL thugs attack socialists, beat up pensioner

On 28 April, English Defence League thugs attacked a socialist stall in Lewisham, south east London.

The gang smashed up the Socialist Workers Party stall, and assaulted the SWP members around it, headbutting 69 year old Andrew Smith and severely injuring him.

Smith has a possible fractured sinus and torn retina.

Lewisham NUT has called a protest against the EDL, against racism and against cuts: 11.30am, 12 May, Lewisham Clock Tower, Lewisham High Street

Tory support begins to crumble

Labour gained 823 council seats in the 3 May 2012 local elections. The Tories lost 405, and the Lib Dems 336.

UKIP and Greens scored fairly well, but made no breakthrough: the Greens gained 11 new seats, UKIP gained no new seats. The BNP lost all the seats it contested.

Up to and including George Osborne's 21 March 2012 budget, the Tories had retained their base much better than a party in their position — ramming through unpopular cuts while failing to get economic revival — might expect.

Still, they had remained only marginally behind Labour in the polls. The Lib Dems took the electoral

brunt of the coalition's difficulties.

Recently it is as if something has snapped, or at least frayed. Relatively minor things, like the "pasty tax", and potentially huge issues, like the Murdoch connection, have undermined the Tories.

Labour leader Ed Miliband, however, was being no more than prudent when he responded to the 3 May results by saying: "We have more work to do".

The turnout on 3 May was exceptionally low even for local government polls, reflecting widespread disillusion. Labour's share of the vote was 38%, not good for a party which faces an unpopular government and has little competition

in its opposition role. 38% of a 32% turnout is only 12% of the electorate.

The "more work" which Labour and trade union activists need to see from Miliband is some substance to his talk against "predators", an audible campaign against the social cuts and marketisation of the NHS, an opening-up of Labour democracy — and a firm rebuff to the diehard Blairites who have become increasingly assertive in Labour's top ranks.

The councils newly brought under Labour control on 3 May are all set to execute the Tory-imposed cuts: socialists and trade union activists will demand that they instead oppose, defy, and mobilise local working-class com-



Miliband. Much more work to do!

munities against those cuts.

Although Labour beat the Tories by 41% to 32% in the list section of the London Assembly elections, Labour candidate Ken Livingstone lost the mayoral election to the Tories' Boris Johnson.

Since 2008 he had run a sort of mini-popular front campaign, Progressive London, designed to secure him support beyond Labour ranks for the mayoralty in 2012.

The effort failed spectacularly. Johnson evidently outdid Livingstone in the "colourful maverick" act. (More on Livingstone, page 4).

Apart from the Greens' modest gains, other leftist anti-Tory forces outside Labour made little showing.

Five of the twelve candidates standing for George Galloway's Respect group in Bradford won seats on the back of Galloway's 29 March parliamentary by-election victory in Bradford West.

Michael Lavalette won back the Preston council seat which he held for the Socialist Alliance and then for Respect from 2003 to 2011. He stood as an "independent", apparently because he decided to stand too late to complete the formalities to stand as TUSC.

Tony Mulhearn got a respectable 4.86% in the poll

for mayor of Liverpool.

Peter Smith of the Democratic Labour Party, a long-standing Walsall group led by former leaders of the local Labour Party, won back the council seat he held from 2007-2011.

TUSC did poorly in its main campaign, for the list section of the London Assembly election — getting 0.8%, with no other left-of-Labour lists taking votes from its pool of potential support.

TUSC is the electoral front set up as a sequel to the 2009 No2EU operation by the Socialist Party and some leaders of the RMT rail union. It was used as a label by SWP candidates other than Lavalette.

0.8% is poor even compared with the 0.9% got in 2008 by the SWP's Left List campaign, universally admitted to have done poorly. And in 2008 the Left List had to compete with Respect, which got 2.4%.

In 2000 the London Socialist Alliance, on its first outing, won an average 2.9% in the constituency polls and 1.6% in the list section — despite being jostled by the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation (run by RMT activists) with 1.0%, a list led by Peter Tatchell with 1.4%, and the Socialist Labour Party with 0.8%.

TUSC suffered from the toxic combination of being politically dull and minimal and organisationally narrow. Politically, its message was limited to being against cuts and identifying in a general way with trade unions. Organisationally it was a consortium of two small ideological groupings, the SP and the CPB-ish (but not actually CPB) strand in the RMT around Bob Crow.

The TUSC candidates had all the disadvantages of being "propaganda candidates", and almost none of the advantages — clear cut and comprehensive political answers.

Scottish gains for SNP and Labour

By Dale Street

Labour and the SNP were the winners in last week's Scottish council elections. Lib-Dems and Tories were the losers.

Labour won an extra 58 seats, giving it a total of 394 in Scotland as a whole. The SNP won an extra 57 seats, giving it a total of 424. The Lib-Dems lost over half their seats, slumping to 71. The Tories lost 16 seats, leaving them with 115.

Labour failed to make inroads into the SNP vote — most of their gains were from the Lib-Dems — and the SNP did win some seats from Labour.

SNP results were no repeat of last year's Holyrood elections, and they came nowhere near winning control of Glasgow City Council.

The "Glasgow First" candidates — a breakaway from Labour after the deselection of a number of councillors — won one seat but otherwise failed to make an impact.

PACT

In Glasgow a non-aggression pact had been agreed.

The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) did a deal with the Scottish Anti-Cuts Alliance (SACA), consisting of the Socialist Party Scotland (SPS), the SWP, and Solidarity (the Sheridan-led breakaway from the SSP).

The eight SSP candidates averaged a score of just under a hundred first-preference votes. The nine SACA candidates scored an average of 60.

For Solidarity, Gail Sheridan picked up 472 votes — the name still counts for something — but their other two candidates got under a hundred. SSP and SACA candidates standing elsewhere than in Glasgow did no better.

The only exception was sitting SSP councillor Jim Bolland's re-election in West Dumbartonshire.

The SSP and SACA both argued that their candidates, if elected, would oppose all cuts. But the SSP is seen as a "busted flush" after the 2006 split, while SACA lacked any kind of profile — it was not the "political wing" of a broad anti-cuts movement but simply (another) flag of convenience for the SPS and the SWP.

These elections were almost "apolitical", in the sense that neither Labour nor the SNP offered a strategy for fighting the Tory cuts.

The view from TUSC

Pete McLaren, independent socialist representative on the TUSC National Steering Committee and 2012 candidate in Rugby, says TUSC has made modest gains.

TUSC's election results were a modest improvement on last year.

Standing mostly as Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts, TUSC stood a total of 133 candidates in England and Wales on 3 May, standing in 132 wards in 40 councils, proportionally a higher number of candidates than last year. In addition TUSC stood in the Liverpool Mayoral contest and for the GLA. In total these candidates polled 43,671 votes.

In the council elections TUSC averaged 6.2%, up on last year's 5.2%. The increase was even greater in the 74 wards where there had also been a TUSC candidate in 2011 — an average of 6.8% compared to 5.4%. The overall average of 6.2% is the best per-

formance in local elections for a long time for a far left/ socialist party/ coalition.

TUSC gained two councilors — Michael Lavalette in Preston and Pete Smith in Walsall. Sadly Dave Nellist lost his Coventry St Michael's seat by just 204 votes, nearly wiping out a Labour majority of 1,200 two years ago. St Michael's is a very transient ward with an annual population turnover of up to 30%. The Socialist Party had done well to have held on to it for so long.

TUSC averaged 0.8% in the GLA elections, comparable to past regional and national results — the Socialist Alliance averaged 0.98% at its highpoint when it stood 98 candidates in the 2001 General Election.

Tony Mulhearn did well in Liverpool, coming fifth out of 12 with 4.86%, beating the Tories, UKIP and the BNP, and finishing less than 4% off 2nd place.

Another measure for our supporters is the ratio

of TUSC votes to Labour. Last year it was 1:10, this year 1:9. A modest improvement, but much more marked in areas TUSC had developed a local campaigning branch.

In my own town of Rugby, for example, the ratio was 1:3 — one TUSC vote for every three Labour votes. In fact, Rugby TUSC doubled its votes, averaging 10% over 8 wards, an increase of 2.8%.

Building campaigning TUSC branches is the way forward, along with making TUSC accountable and acceptable to the left who don't believe Labour is, or can be, a workers' party.

We need to start building TUSC into a party, uniting the left in the process, campaigning under that name on every issue affecting the working class to build its profile and develop deeper roots within communities.

Standing in elections is just part of that process.

A socialist programme for housing

By Pete Gilman

The Tory attack on the welfare state is ideological, it is not about tackling debt. In housing this is combined with sheer greed.

Housing is a basic need. to the Tories it is a commodity to be used for maximum profit.

In the 1980s Thatcher virtually abolished building social housing, creating huge shortages and simultaneously driving vast numbers into the private sector. The Tories now want to increase rents to market levels for council and housing association tenants. In

many areas this means rents increasing to £350-400 a week.

Iain Duncan Smith's assertion that Tory policy will reduce private sector rents flies in the face of all reality and the experience of private sector tenants whose rents are soaring.

The interplay of market forces means social housing rent increases drive up private sector rents. This is very good for landlord companies and estate agents who are raking in millions as a consequence, — just look at the price of lettings in any estate agent window — but very bad for tenants.

The Tory-imposed cap on housing benefit will see many driven out of their homes to find cheaper accommodation elsewhere. The Tories talk about the high cost of housing benefit but this has been caused by the high rent policies of successive governments.

The Tory plans have led to the beginning of an "ethnic cleansing" of working class people from parts of London and the south east.

It is not enough to condemn the Tories and their Lib Dem poodles. We need positive policies from Labour. Unfortunately housing is another issue on which any vision from

Labour is sadly lacking.

We need a socialist housing programme which would include:

1. Every year for the last thirty years rents have risen substantially faster than the rate of inflation. As a proportion of income, rents in Britain are the highest in the EU. We need a two year rent freeze. After this rent increases for all social housing, both council and housing association, should never to go above the rate of inflation.

2. Protection of tenure for all those in social housing, and increased security for those in private rented accommodation.

3. A substantial increase in the building of new social housing, with the emphasis on council housing.

4. A cap to be imposed on all private sector rents.

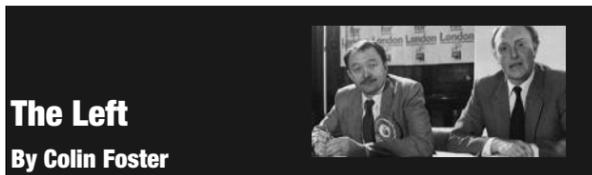
5. The full restoration of all housing benefits.

6. Additional help for the first time home buyer.

7. Many people buying or renting in the private sector are being ruthlessly ripped off. We need a special body, with legal powers of enforcement, to investigate and curtail the blatant profiteering of landlord companies and estate agents.

This programme could reverse the government's attack on social housing.

Livingstone: goodbye and good riddance



The Left
By Colin Foster

Conceding defeat in the contest for London mayor, on 3 May, Ken Livingstone said: "This is my last election".

As with many things Livingstone says, it's not true. Livingstone is a candidate on the "centre-left" list in Labour's National Executive this year. Though many of those who have nominated him will confirm privately that Livingstone is utterly unreliable on the Executive, they think they have no choice but to have him on the list, because he's a potential winner and a reliable right-winger might replace him.

But in the mayoral contest Livingstone won much less than the Labour vote, despite his efforts since 2008 to construct a mini-popular-front, Progressive London, to get himself a vote *broader* than Labour's. He is 67 years old next month. So May 2012 just might be his last high-profile public election.

Voters on 3 May could see nothing left-wing in Livingstone's pitch, and only gimcrackery in his attempts to display himself as a maverick. Sadly, that lucidity led to London being handed to right-wing Tory Boris Johnson; and the left has not yet become as lucid about Livingstone as the broad London electorate. His departure from the public scene can only help the left sort itself out.

Ken Livingstone was once a left-winger. As a Lambeth, Camden, and GLC councillor in the 1970s he had a good record. He always differed from the revolutionary socialist left, arguing that council rate (property-tax) rises to offset the Thatcher cuts were positively progressive rather than an evasion; but at the time that position seemed more honest than the general soft-left pitch, that rate rises were undesirable but necessary to "gain time".

Livingstone was energetic, talented, and willing to collaborate with *Socialist Organiser* (forerunner of *Solidarity*). He collaborated even after a whole faction of *Socialist Organiser* people peeled away on the rate-rise issue.

Later, in an autobiography, Livingstone would claim to have initiated that split. The duplicity was typical. By 1985 Livingstone had done his dash. He settled the Greater London Council, which he had led since 1981, in a "safe" pos-



While London mayor, Livingstone promoted the Islamist cleric, Yusuf al Qaradawi

ture, and openly announced his rallying to Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party leadership. Trying to disarm critics by effrontery, he wrote in *Tribune*: "I'm for manipulative politics... the cynical soft-sell".

Livingstone could not get the front-bench post with Kinnock that he wanted, or not at the right price, so, becoming an MP in 1987, he tacked carefully so as to retain backing on the left as well as keeping his options open on the right.

The tacking was what was special about him. Many other former Labour local government leftists moved right as their career hopes increased, and no comment was necessary on David Blunkett or Margaret Hodge other than that it was an old, old story.

MEDDLE

Livingstone, even when for example declaring himself "95% Blairite" in his effort to get the Labour nomination for mayor of London, in 2000, continued to meddle with the left.

In the early 1990s he got a column in the *Sun* and used it to pursue a faction-fight against the SWP and the Anti-Nazi League, for the benefit of the rival Anti-Racist Alliance.

In July 1998, helping some allies in the student movement, he told a student meeting that the conflicts between himself and Sean Matgamna of *Socialist Organiser* and *Solidarity* should be explained by the alleged fact that Matgamna was "mad" and "most probably an MI5 agent".

From 2000, as mayor of London, he hired members of a secretive ex-Trotskyist group, Socialist Action, to City Hall jobs. Livingstone probably saw it in terms of "using" assistants who could safeguard his left flank, and who, because

in their heads their backroom posts fitted somehow into some strategy for socialism, would be more energetic than routine careerists.

There is no evidence that he was influenced by the ideas of Socialist Action, or regarded their strategic fantasies with anything other than contempt. Oddly, the one "left" group which seems really to have impressed Livingstone was the most corrupt of those he dealt with: Gerry Healy's Workers' Revolutionary Party. He acted as a "front man" for Healy's Labour Party paper, *Labour Herald*, between 1981 and 1985.

At a guess, what impressed him about the WRP was exactly what made honest leftists abhor it: its ability to sustain a large political machine (its own daily paper as well as the "non-attributable" *Labour Herald*, extensive property and staff, lavish rallies) with the help of money got from Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, and the PLO in return for "exposing" Jews in British public life, monitoring Iraqi dissidents, printing praise of tyrants, etc. The mentality, I guess, was the same as that of the naive cynics in the 1930s who enjoyed collaborating with the Stalinist machine while openly acknowledging its misdeeds, and who would later be nostalgic for Stalin.

According to the recently-published autobiography of Alex Mitchell, who edited Healy's daily paper in that period: "Livingstone began [around 1981] attending private meetings in Healy's tiny sitting room above a carpet shop in Clapham High Street... 'Red Ken' Livingstone relished discussion on philosophy, political theory, and history. Healy quickly developed a keen rapport with Livingstone and suggested a list of books he should read to establish a grounding in Marxism... Healy enjoyed Livingstone's lively sense of humour and he often broke longstanding engagements just to spend time talking to him" (*Come the Revolution*, p393).

As late as March 1994 — long after the WRP had exploded in 1985, Healy had been thoroughly exposed by his disillusioned former comrades, and no career advantage could be got from saying anything good about Healy — Livingstone wrote a puff for a laudatory biography of Healy by diehard loyalists: "The split in the WRP during 1985 was the work of MI5 agents. It was a privilege to have worked with Gerry Healy" (Foreword to *Gerry Healy: a revolutionary life*, by Corinna Lotz and Paul Feldman).

As the left revives, it will learn to shun those who abuse it. There will be future Ken Livingstones of a sort, because, until we have changed society comprehensively, there will always be cynics and shameless careerists. But the left will spurn them.



Remembering Dave Spencer

Dave and I were comrades together in the proto-AWL prior to a split in 1984, when Dave left with a group of people around Alan Thornett who he didn't agree with politically.

He spent a lot of his time after that complaining in various left publications about the "bureaucratism" of the "Matgamna sect." He also did the rounds of various left groups looking for a political home he never found.

I liked Dave and despite this later political trajectory, I choose to remember his early days and the positive contribution he made to the struggle.

Jim Denham

I got to know Dave Spencer in the 1970s when he recruited me to what was then, I think, Workers' Action.

He almost blew it when he told me, a keen if naive anti-Vietnam-war activist, that the Vietcong was a Stalinist outfit. After this stuttering start, we had many thoroughly enjoyable as well as politically rich meetings in Dave's front room with some wonderful comrades he brought together.

Dave was funny and engaging and had lots of curiosity into human foibles — including, alas, my own. I never quite understood why Dave got so hot under the collar about the split in the mid-1980s but in the early days he was a fine comrade for the proto-AWL.

I want to register my sorrow at Dave's death and send my condolences to his family.

Robert Fine

I met Dave in the late 70s in Coventry. I was a very young Trotskyite and he led lots of discussion groups on the finer points of the proletarian struggle and such.

I do remember him with deep affection. He was a lovely man with some deeply personal struggles and big intellect and understanding that needed satiating.

I left Coventry in 1980 — I was 19 — when it really was a ghost town. By which time I had had political dialogue and involvement with Dave in a range of struggles — the call for democracy within the Labour Party, meeting reps form the political wing of the IRA, Zanu and Zapu and Cosatu.

And of course we had been deeply involved in the anti-fascist activity and local issues, especially housing, and CND. I often think about Dave.

Judith Bonner

Dave recruited me to Workers' Action in the late 70s.

Dave was always ready to discuss any ideas that a new comrade wanted to sound off about and never made you feel unable to speak out. A rare gift on the left as we know it now.

He was a very open, unassuming, friendly giant, until the split. Then he became quite bitter.

Despite that, when he met me one day he could see that I was in a bad way. I was being bullied at work by an extremely sexist man. Dave's response was immediate. He wanted to wait for the sexist at the works gate and have a go at him.

This wasn't macho bravado, it was support for a comrade in trouble. A good bloke.

Jean Lane

I got to know Dave when we were both in the process of being expelled from the International Socialism group (IS) in 1971. I was a sympathiser of the Trotskyist Tendency (TT), later Workers Fight.

I met Dave briefly before he was required to speak on behalf of the TT at the Birmingham IS meeting. I was the only TT person there, 19 years old in a large branch of 80 people with some serious IS heavies, Dave Hughes, later leader of Workers Power but leading Cliff loyalist then, Roger Rosewall, IS Industrial Organiser (later trade union witch-hunter for the right-wing Economic League).

The image I have of Dave in that meeting is, in a very typical pose, his shoulders raised, his arms outstretched appeal-

ing to reason. And as he saw the machine responses, the slurs and half-truths, Dave's eyebrows raised and a look of disbelief appeared on his face. We lost the argument, we were expelled.

Dave in Coventry Workers' Fight always attracted some very decent and experienced working class activists. They were very much working class sages. And I always think they were attracted to the group by Dave's personality.

Later, when I did meet him he was always friendly although I think he had me down as a Matgamna hack. He didn't approve, nor did he really understand the political "street-fighting" that a small Marxist group has to do. I think it was all too reminiscent of his early days in the Socialist Labour League which determined his overwhelming desire to be against the "sectarians".

I think he always wanted a too simple solution to that but there is no denying that he was sincere and genuine in that desire. And he continued to fight.

Pete Radcliff

Netherlands

I think Martin Thomas' take on the political situation in the Netherlands (*Solidarity* 244) is basically right.

One caveat: I don't think the Socialist Party (SP) is quite as narrowly nationalistic as suggested.

Its Euro MP, Dennis de Jong, has been making headway in putting forward initiatives at European level, for minimum corporate tax levels, for example. And I think the SP's position on Greece has been pretty good, opposing the prevailing Greek-bashing and opposing the bailouts purely on the grounds that they're really bailouts for French and German banks and impose unacceptable suffering on working Greeks.

And the SP is less bad than the so-called Green Left, which backs the current austerity package, or even the Labour Party, which has major qualms about its opposition.

SP leader Roemer has warned that the austerity package should be sent to Brussels stamped "good only until 12 September" (the date of the next elections) — probably an empty threat, sadly, but a justified one.

Peter Drucker, Amsterdam

Relaunch the pensions fight!

On 10 May the PCS civil service union is striking against the government's "work longer, pay more, get less" changes to public-sector pensions.

The lecturers' union UCU is also striking, in further education colleges and post-1992 universities. Members of the Unite union in the health service will be staging protests and industrial action.

There is talk of a further strike, maybe involving the teachers' union NUT, in late June.

To make 10 May a relaunch, and not just a swansong, PCS needs to genuinely place itself on a "war footing":

- vigorous recruiting of new members;
- a levy to help fund paid selective action;
- the development of a meaningful plan to hurt the employer, through the use of national, selective and other action on a rapid tempo.

PCS must combine more frequent national strike action with paid selective action and rolling regional action. We must seek to hit the government hard and often. We need action to win the dispute — not just to force the Government into "genuine consultation" as the PCS leaders say.

PCS, as the only large union to reject the government's 19 December terms unambiguously and immediately, must develop its own strategy for winning the civil service pension dispute. It should build a wider cross-union fightback, but not wait for the other unions.

If the PCS leaders do not do that, they place the fate of their members in the hands of the least-militant leaders of other unions.

The same goes for other unions which reject the terms: NUT, Unite, UCU. They should not wait for PCS, either. NUT leaders should follow the instruction of their union conference, at Easter, which mandated them *not* to wait for agreement from the leaders of the other big teachers' union, NASUWT, before striking again.

In all the unions, the dispute has been entirely in the hands of the union leaders. Everyone agrees that a dispute of this importance cannot be won by a series of one-day strikes separated by months of inactivity (June 2011, November 2011, and now May 2012). No democratic discussion decided to go for that approach. We need democratic debate, and a changed strategy.

The pensions dispute is the first national clash of the public sector unions with a Tory-led coalition intent on making the working class pay for the financial crisis ripping through the capitalist world. If the unions win, the confidence of trade union members will grow. If the unions lose, the Tories will renew their attacks.

Momentum has been lost since the strike in November 2011, over five months ago. We cannot afford another long lull. Trade-unionists need to build on the 10 May strike and rebuild momentum.

After 10 May, the next possible turning points are the "group" (sector) conferences, and then the national conference, of PCS in the week starting 21 May, and the teachers' unofficial "Local Association for Action on Pensions" conference in Liverpool on 16 June. UCU congress is 8-10 June in Manchester.

- bit.ly/16-june

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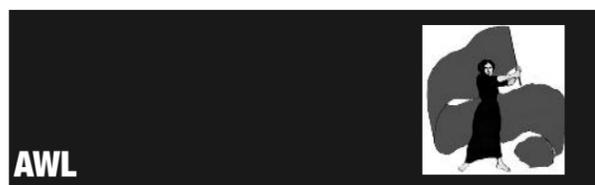
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Workers' Liberty showed me how to be active



Demaine Boocock was a delegate from a Southport sixth form college to the 2012 conference of the National Union of Students. She explains how she got politically active.

I thought the student protests in 2010-2011 were cool and supported them, but I was never involved. People talked about it at my high school and were pissed off at tuition fees but that was the extent of my knowledge.

I only got involved in student politics through getting involved with Workers' Liberty and subsequently NCAFC.

Our student union is more like a student council. It's not a political body and the vast majority of students aren't involved. They organise school dances, charity stuff and deal with a few complaints but that seems to be about it.

I found out about NUS conference through Workers' Liberty and NCAFC, not NUS. It's what I said in my speech to conference, and it's true! I got myself delegated through sending a lot of emails to the student council and following it up by asking at meetings. I just kept at it so eventually I got the information. It wasn't a very democratic procedure.

I thought NUS conference was good by way of left-wing motions (free education and a national demonstration are the ones that stand out for me) and getting one lefty elected as a full-time position, so I'm pleased with that. At the time the left all seemed to work fairly well together, although I've since heard stories that this was not the case.

I think there were problems with accessibility at the conference — the timing is bad for further education students. But changing it to the holidays would marginalise international students. Also, the conference wasn't long enough and important motions dropped off the agenda — i.e. anti-fascist/anti-racist motion.

I think the left-wing motions on further education — free education and supporting walkouts and EMA — are great and could potentially really work. However, the leadership could be slack on this unless people really pressure NUS.

I'm very excited at the prospect of walkouts and a national demo. Having the NUS behind you really does help with wary students, teachers, parents and student councils; it gives it a degree of legitimacy and a wider scope. At the same time, though, it's clear that NUS has been rubbish in the past by the fact that hardly anybody at my college is involved and a lot don't even realise that it is the national union of students, representing their interests and able to make political change.

For example, one guy told me he thought NUS was just about "make-believe", which I think says a lot.

Help the AWL raise £20,000

The labour movement in Barnet and Camden celebrated last week as Tory Brian Coleman lost his London Assembly seat. If incoming London Mayor Boris Johnson has any sense he will also remove Coleman from the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, cheering up the Fire Brigades Union as well.

Coleman, self-styled "King of Bling", is notorious for his rudeness to residents and even fellow Conservative politicians, for his greed at public expense — exorbitant taxi fares a speciality — and for his right-wing policies: he once boasted there was nothing he wouldn't privatise.

But Coleman is only the unacceptable face of current Tory policies and of the rottenness of the bourgeois political system. The Labour candidate, Andrew Dismore, who beat him, supports Royal Mail privatisation.

We need to transform the labour movement to fight for socialism and real working class political representation. To do that, organisations such as the AWL need funds.

If you think you can help us...

● Take out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.

● Make a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

● Organise a fundraising event.

● Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.

● Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, SE1 3DG.



Total raised so far: £12,848

We only raised £55 last week. We will raise our £20,000 target by September — but only if we return to previous weeks' better totals. Thanks to Dan and Vicki for donations.

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Hollande: already backtracking

By Ed Maltby

Francois Hollande, the centre-left Parti Socialiste President of France, has swiftly backtracked on the left-wing rhetoric of his campaign, in an attempt to calm down the financial markets.

Hollande had campaigned on a pledge to end austerity, creating 150,000 public sector jobs, hiring 60,000 teachers and lowering the retirement age for some groups of workers. He also proposed a 75% tax on the wealthiest individuals in society.

His election was presented as a blow to the Franco-German drive for European austerity that Sarkozy had engineered alongside Merkel.

But his election caused consternation in the financial markets. The Euro dropped against the dollar, and the Asian markets fell even further, and Barclays Bank issued a note expressing concern about France's new relationship with Germany.

Hollande has been riding high on anti-austerity sentiment among the French working class. But now he has got to reel his rhetoric back in, to reassure the people to whom he sees himself as being really accountable — French and international capitalists. His close advisor Michel Sapin has told journalists, "No-one can expect us to arrive and give everyone handouts... Joy... gives way very, very quickly to responsibility."

Reuters comments, "While Sarkozy clashed head on with France's powerful unions, the Socialists' closer ties with them — particularly the moderate CFDT — may allow them to accomplish bolder reforms."

Hollande plans to balance the budget by 2017 and accepts that this means making public spending cuts. In particular, he plans to further reform the French public pensions system in the autumn — an ominous promise.

Hollande recently remarked, "The final months of a campaign generally cost a lot to the public purse when you take into account the promises made which often mean big spending".

The New Anticapitalist Party, the biggest left group in France, commented: "Having promised to not make us any promises, he now says that after 7 May he will erase all the promises he didn't make".

Hollande's promise on 60,000 new teaching posts is also not what it might at first seem: his lieutenant Sapin has helpfully clarified: "Increasing the number of state employees in public education has never meant increasing the overall number of people employed by the state". Translation: we'll make cuts elsewhere.

It is up to the French left and labour movement to extract concessions from Hollande and make sure his election really does push back euro-austerity.

By Martin Thomas

The election results in France and Greece (6 May), and the forced resignation of militantly neo-liberal Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte (23 April), have thrown economic policy in the eurozone into flux.

There are four main distinct approaches in play. The debate between them has scarcely started in the British labour movement, where even the would-be Marxist left has so far mostly limited itself to a sort of conservative syndicalism: opposing cuts in Britain, advocating more militant tactics, applauding resistance elsewhere in Europe, and commenting that the EU leaders are making a mess of things.

There is debate in Britain among economists. Jonathan Portes, head of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, former Chief Economist at the Cabinet Office, and an "establishment" economist if ever there was one, responded to the French and Greek elections by declaring that "the idiots in Brussels", "the austerity crowd", had "lost the arguments", and economic life should now be boosted by a big and concerted programme of public spending on infrastructure (roads, rail, schools, hospitals, housing, other public facilities).

The Marxist left should break from its defensive, hunkered-down stance, and take the debate into the labour movement.

Until now neo-liberal policy has dominated. It proposes that governments which cannot borrow on open global financial markets, or have difficulty doing so, must mend their position by huge social cuts.

It advocates strict budget-balancing even for the better-off countries like Germany and the Netherlands; and, indeed, constitutional amendments across Europe to make balanced budgets compulsory except in extremes. To demands for "growth" it responds that the only way is via "labour market reforms", in other words smashing up workers' rights, making labour markets ultra-flexible for the bosses, cutting social overhead costs.

Like George Osborne's policy in Britain, it is above all a policy for the bosses and bankers to "use" the economic crisis to their advantage, in shifting the balance of class forces further against the working class (and, they hope, permanently) — rather than a policy to ease the crisis.

Its priority, as Angela Merkel put it in December 2011, is to "show [footloose global capital] that Europe is a safe place to invest".

It is an arrogant policy which risks provoking serious nationalist backlashes against the slowly-evolved reduction of barriers within Europe. It means unelected European Union officials monitoring each elected government's budget each year and vetoing it unless it includes enough cuts and marketisations.

EURO-KEYNESIAN

There is a Euro-Keynesian approach. It advocates easing the credit difficulties of the Greek and other governments by lending on easy terms from the European Central Bank, or by the issuing of Eurobonds guaranteed by the collective creditworthiness of the eurozone.

It favours a wealth tax to raise revenue, but opposes rapid deficit reduction through social cuts, and says that better-off countries positively should be running large government budget deficits so as to boost market demand across Europe. It calls for audits of government debt, and repudiation of parts of it.

It demands a big expansion of the budget of the European Union itself (as distinct from member states), and EU-financed investment projects in the worse-off countries.

Many left-wing economists advocate the full Euro-Keynesian package. Left social-democrats, notably Syriza in Greece, advocate versions of it. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the left social-democrat candidate in the French presidential election, said that the European Central Bank must be placed "under democratic control to allow it to lend at low — or even nil — rates, directly to the states, and to buy public debt".

Shreds of Euro-Keynesianism can be found right across the mainstream political spectrum, through François Hollande to the fiercely-cutting "technocrat" Italian prime minister Mario Monti and the IMF, and even in the recent statement by neo-liberal German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble

that "it is fine if wages in Germany currently rise faster than in other EU countries".

At an angle to the range from Schäuble to Syriza are two other approaches: the national-Keynesian and the revolutionary socialist.

Far-right groups like the Front National in France push the most popular version of the national-Keynesian approach: quit the euro, import controls, reindustrialise, more government regulation of the economy and the banks. The FN upholds the interests of smaller-scale French capitalist businesses who orient primarily to France's internal market and are indifferent or hostile to France being a "safe place to invest" for global capital.

A FN government would block migration; scapegoat and harass the immigrant workers already in France; and enforce "government regulation" in the shape of crushing the labour movement and democratic rights.

There is a left-wing version of the national-Keynesian approach, similar to the "Alternative Economic Strategy" popular in Britain's Labour left in the 1970s and 80s. Groups like the KKE in Greece suggest that if countries quit the EU, reimpose controls on trade and capital movements, and use government to promote domestic industry, then the labour movement can win better conditions in the national framework than in a wider one.

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

Revolutionary socialists agree that no national labour movement should wait for a cross-European movement.

A workers' government in a single country, emerging in advance of a large cross-Europe revolutionary working-class movement, would have no choice but to defy EU rulings and face exclusion from the EU. It would have to use economic border controls to sustain, as best it could, an economy within that country dominated by workers' control and economic equalisation, and to navigate within the world market.

An isolated workers' government could only be a temporary makeshift. The workers' revolution would have to spread to other areas quickly, or collapse. Over 150 years ago, in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels wrote that "united action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat", and the international intertwining of the forces of production has increased hugely since then, especially in Europe.

We therefore advance, in the first place, a cross-Europe programme, with these main points:

- Tax the rich, Europe-wide.
- Expropriate the banks and the big corporations, Europe-wide. Put them under workers' and democratic control. Gear their resources to the reconstruction of public services, decent jobs, and social welfare.
- Thorough-going democracy across Europe. Social leveling-up across the continent, to the best level of workers' rights and conditions won in any part of it.
- Win workers' governments across Europe, and join them in a democratic federation.

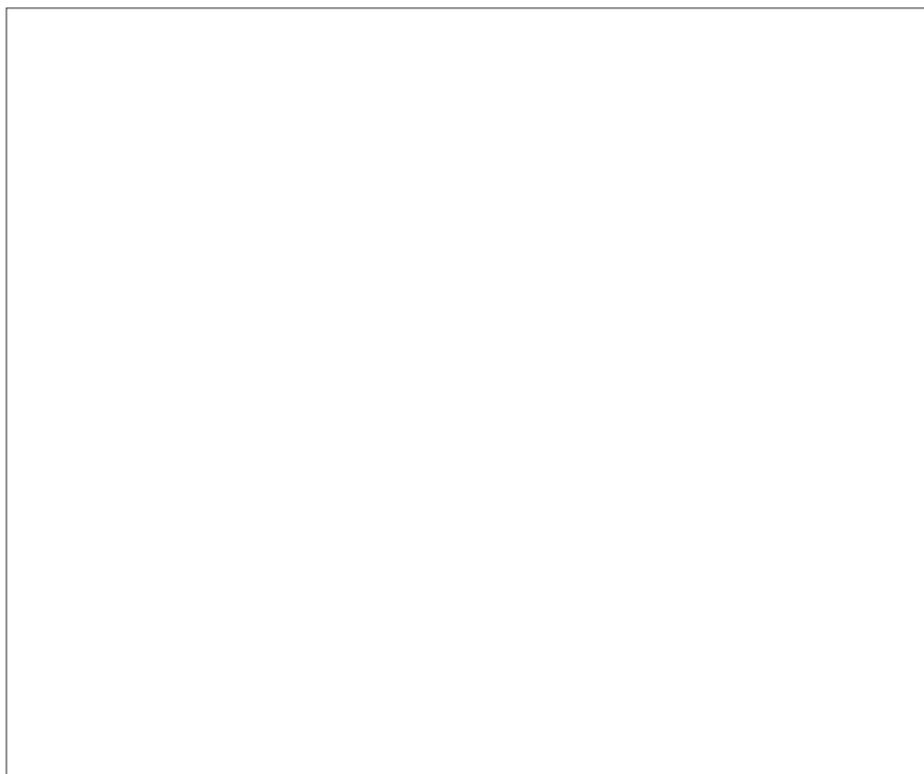
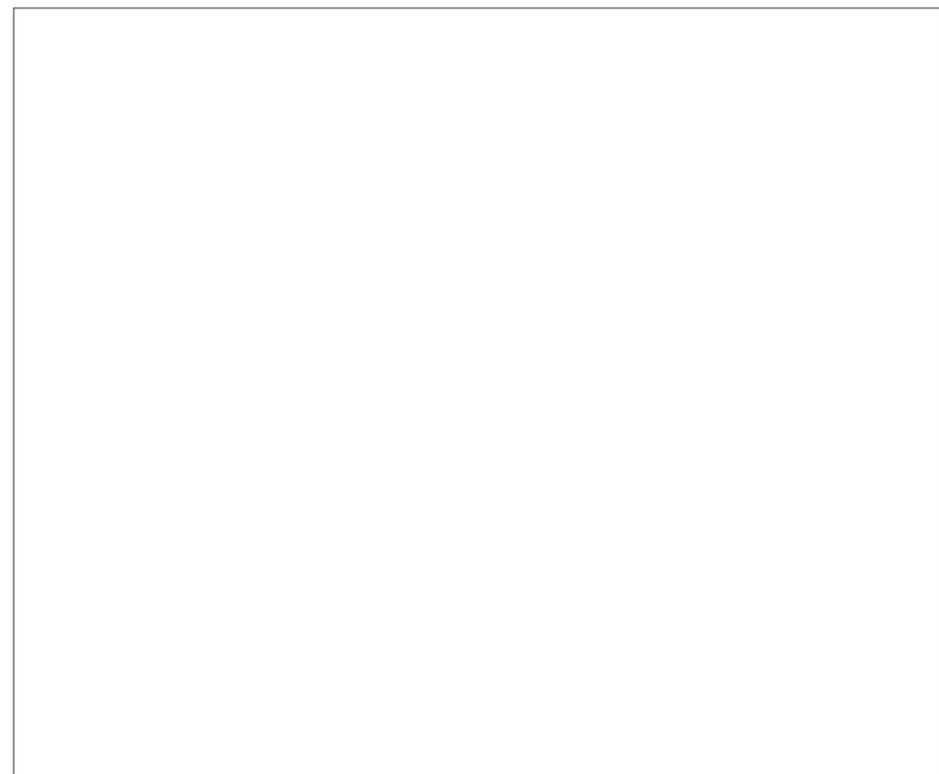
Too extreme? Unrealistic? Leon Trotsky met similar objections in the 1930s. "The masses do not come to us because our ideas are too complicated and our slogans too advanced. It is therefore necessary to simplify our program, water down our slogans — in short, to throw out some ballast".

He responded: "Basically, this means: Our slogans must correspond not to the objective situation, not to the relation of classes, analysed by the Marxist method, but to subjective assessments (extremely superficial and inadequate ones) of what the 'masses' can or cannot accept. But what masses? The mass is not homogeneous. It develops. It feels the pressure of events. It will accept tomorrow what it will not accept today. Our cadres will blaze the trail with increasing success for our ideas and slogans, which will be shown to be correct, because they are confirmed by the march of events and not by subjective and personal assessments".

Trotsky also argued that where the revolutionary socialists were a small minority, they should not *limit themselves* to reciting their programme and waiting for support to arrive, but should also seek leverage in the debates and battles opened up by the inadequate programmes of bigger forces.

The French and Greek elections, and the Dutch government crisis, which have showed that the capitalist classes' Eu-

ames for Euro-crisis



A right-wing national Keynesianism is advocated by Marine Le Pen of Front National, a left-wing and more Euro-oriented Keynesianism by Jean-Luc Mélenchon

ropean strategy is in trouble, have also showed that the revolutionary left is still small (1.2% for Antarsya in Greece, 1.8% for NPA and Lutte Ouvrière in France), and that *so far* the shift to the left is a shift to left social democracy (Syriza in Greece, SP in Netherlands, Mélenchon in France).

In 1934, for example, Trotsky polemicised with his Belgian comrades when they wanted to respond to an economic “labour plan”, of a vaguely state-capitalist sort, proposed by the big social-democratic party, just by scorning it.

Trotsky agreed that “it would be more correct to call it: the plan to deceive the toilers”. He agreed that, as such, it was only “a new, or a renovated instrument of bourgeois-democratic (or even semi-democratic) conservatism”. In fact, the author of the Plan, social-democratic leader Henri de Man, would become a collaborator with the Nazi occupation in World War Two.

Told by his Belgian comrades that “the working masses are absolutely indifferent to the Labor Plan and are in general in a state of depression”, Trotsky said he didn’t know, but accepted there might well be “a certain nervous exhaustion and passivity of the workers”.

Yet he insisted that “our task is twofold”, and not just one of expounding and scorning. “First, to explain to the advanced workers the political meaning of the ‘plan’, that is, decipher the manoeuvres of the social-democracy at all stages; secondly, to show in practice to possibly wider circles of workers that insofar as the bourgeoisie tries to put obstacles to the realisation of the plan we fight hand in hand with the workers to help them make this experiment.

“We share the difficulties of the struggle but not the illusions. *Our criticism of the illusions must, however, not increase the passivity of the workers and give it a pseudo-theoretic justification but on the contrary push the workers forward.* Under these conditions, the inevitable disappointment with the ‘Labor Plan’ will not spell the deepening of passivity but, on the contrary, the going over of the workers to the revolutionary road” (emphasis added).

GERMAN EXAMPLE

A similar approach had been taken by the German Communist Party in 1921-3, increasing its mass support, and putting it on the brink of a revolutionary situation in October 1923 (which, however, under Stalin’s malign guidance from Moscow, the Communist Party then botched).

Rapid inflation in Germany meant that the bosses could, by delaying tax payments, make them nominal. Deprived of revenues, the government had to print money to keep going, which in turn produced more rapid inflation: a vicious circle.

In May 1921 the Social Democrat minister Robert Schmidt

proposed “appropriation of real values”, or “Sachwertfassung”: the government should tax capital by taking a 20% share in all businesses. That would both help the government guide the shattered economy and bring in real income.

The government never implemented the idea, but it gained popularity in a working class angry that pay-as-you-go taxes on their wages were the only taxes being collected effectively. The Social Democratic-led unions took it up, demanding a 25% share.

In November 1921 the Communist Party decided to pick up on the demand for “appropriation of real values”, proposing it at a rate of 51% to allow public control of the economy.

Through to 1923, “Sachwertfassung” became a major theme of CP advocacy, soon linked with the call for a “workers’ government” (a joint Communist-Social Democrat government which would carry out a specified series of radical measures, such as the “appropriation of real values” and workers’ control over production).

The left *national* Keynesian programmes cannot be used for leverage in this way, because trying to do that would pull us

into the false position of advocating the rebuilding of barriers between nations as a desirable first step (rather than as a temporary expedient maybe necessary if one national labour movement moves far ahead of others).

We cannot endorse the Euro-Keynesian programmes as a “first step”, because they beg the question of how to deal with the banks’ resistance; they dodge the issue of “labour-market reform” (in fact, the more mainstream versions openly support “labour movement reform” and cuts in *current* social spending, arguing only that those cuts should be offset by public *investment* spending); and in general they are advice to the ruling classes rather than mobilisation plans for the working class.

We can take many elements in the Euro-Keynesian programmes — cancellation of debt (at least partial); increased social spending (at least on investment projects); democratic control of the ECB — and sharpen and build on them.

In that way our criticism will not increase passivity — by suggesting that nothing but a uniform shade of grey is possible until everyone first rallies round the revolutionary socialist minority — but make the most of all the divisions and disputes within the system.

Greece: need for a new voice

Paulin, an activist from the Greek left group OKDE, spoke to *Solidarity* after Greece’s 6 May election, which resulted in a parliament where, so far, no party has been able to form a government:

Syriza, after the announcement of the results, said they will try to form “a left government”. But it is very difficult because the KKE has said that they will not participate in any government. Also the Democratic Left, a split from Syriza last year, will not participate in government.

Syriza changed its face before the election and accepted ex-members of PASOK into what it called a “Syriza United Social Front”. Many PASOK voters went over to Syriza.

The programme of Syriza is not clear, it is changing all the time.

We participated in the election for the first time in our history and got a small vote, around 2,000 votes.

The bulk of the left vote went to Syriza in this election and that is responsible for the low score for OKDE and An-

tarsya [the main far-left coalition]. Even anarchists voted Syriza. People voted massively for Syriza to stop the main two parties [ND and Pasok].

The 7% score for Golden Dawn [the neo-Nazi party] is not such a surprise if you look at the background.

Right-wing voters used to be represented by the big right or centre-right parties like New Democracy or Laos. After the destruction of those two parties, a lot of voters went to the fascist group.

The votes for Golden Dawn were radical, anti-system votes against all political parties and the whole system. The danger is obvious. But I do not think, personally, that this group has a social weight matching its votes.

Syriza, too, has gained a large number of votes but you cannot see them winning more people, organising more people into their party.

The radical left in general has different points of view on the situation. We will have to wait and see. There is a great need for a new revolutionary organisation in Greece. We are fighting for that goal.

Callum Macrae: witness to atrocity

Film-maker Callum Macrae has made two influential films about Sri Lanka. He has been nominated for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

Under the guise of rehabilitation and reconstruction the Sri Lankan government is attempting a Sinhalisation of the north of the country — an attempt to destroy the Tamil community.

Thousands of Tamils remain displaced while Tamil property is taken over and given to the military.

The army is opening hotels in the north. You can go whale spotting with the Sri Lankan navy. You cannot go to the east, where the final battles took place [in the 2008-9 war]. The army is taking over Tamil farms and shops. This has the very sinister effect of destroying the Tamil community's ability to rebuild itself.

Soldiers in the overwhelmingly Sinhalese army are paid a bonus if they have a third child; in the north and east the incentive to have a third child is especially strong. [The same processes] are going on nationally: the militarisation of the whole of Sri Lankan society along with the re-inforcing of the pro-Mahinda-Rajapaksa [President] element of the army. Part of that is the jailing of the former general, Sarath Fonseka, who stood as an opponent of the government in the 2010 elections.

All this is illustrated by the attitude of the regime to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commissions. The LLRC called for the military to withdraw from certain elements of civilian administration; the Ministry of Defence was awarded huge contracts for construction work. You even see — ironic given the recent England cricket tour there — the handing over of one each of the main Sri Lanka cricket grounds to the Sri Lankan army, navy and air force. Partially this is a reflection of the corruption of the Sri Lankan cricket board, but also the contempt of the Rajapaksa regime for the civilian administration and for world opinion.

ABSURD

Perhaps most absurd of all, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence is now called the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development!

This is an ultra-nationalist Sinhalese regime which will tolerate no attempt by the Tamils to campaign for their rights. The regime obfuscates on their obligation to grant devolution to the Tamil areas.

Sri Lanka has the fourth-worst record in the world for investigating the murder of journalists. Literally dozens of journalists in Sri Lanka have been murdered, disappeared or exiled. There has been a sinister increase in the use of what's called "white van abductions", where critics are abducted and disappeared by anonymous men driving white vans.

The regime is trying to have its cake and eat it. Throughout the war the regime was enthusiastic in its endorsement of the rhetoric of the Global War on Terror. It used that rhetoric to justify its offensive, ostensibly on the LTTE [Tamil Tigers] but also on civilians.

The rest of the world effectively closed its eyes, hoped it would all end as soon as possible and that there would not be too many dead, doing nothing to stop the genocidal behaviour of Sri Lankan forces in the north east.

Having achieved their aim, the regime changed its tune. In a 2010 speech to the UN Rajapaksa warned the rest of the world to back off. He said that Sri Lanka had to find its own mechanisms and its own culturally-appropriate solutions.

Civilian no-fire zone shelled by the Sri Lankan army

He said foreign-imposed solutions were rarely effective. As we revealed in our film, that speech was written for him by the western consultancy firm Bell Pottinger.

The claim that Sri Lanka is an independent developing sovereign nation being bullied by the West is preposterous. It is a fake, pseudo-anti-imperialist smokescreen for their repression.

The UN and the international community failed catastrophically for a complex variety of reasons. Partly it was to do with the rhetoric of the global war on terror, used to justify Rajapaksa's war against the LTTE. Partly it was to do with the almost universal unpopularity of the LTTE.

In India's case it was largely to do with the Tigers' execution of Rajiv Gandhi, and because the Indian government had no wish to encourage nationalist sentiment among India's 46 million-strong Tamil population (mostly concentrated in Tamil Nadu).

Western regimes, especially the US, UK, France, Norway and others, were constantly protesting but never did, and perhaps never intended to, intervene seriously to stop what was going on.

The UN's tactic throughout was to not do anything which would cause it to be expelled from Sri Lanka altogether. But the consequence was that it did not publish figures on civilian deaths. Many within the UN argue that by not exposing what it knew was happening, was in effect allowing the atrocity to continue.

UN SLOW

The UN took a very long time to do anything after the war as well. Astonishingly, in the immediate aftermath of the war, the UN Human Rights Committee congratulated Sri Lanka on the victory.

That appalling episode was somewhat redeemed two months ago when the Human Rights Council voted by a reasonable majority for a resolution — in fact very soft — calling on Sri Lanka to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity and report back to the UN. It was just a symbolic resolution, but important. The Sri Lankan government lobbied energetically to stop it being passed.

It's fair to say that the revelations in my second film [*Sri Lanka's Killing Fields: War Crimes*] played an important role in raising awareness and convincing the Human Rights Council to vote for the resolution.

If the UN is an organisation whose primary function is to prevent these kind of atrocities on an international scale, it

has so far failed. It remains to be seen whether it will also fail in retrospectively achieving justice.

It was always clear that the Sri Lankan government were determined to remove potential international witnesses and critics. They forced the UN to withdraw from the area, they prevented any international media from getting anywhere near and they silenced their own internal critics.

At the start of the final offensive in January 2009 the editor of the *Sunday Leader*, Lasantha Wickrematunga, a vocal critic of the government including over its treatment of its Tamil minority, was gunned down and killed by forces unknown. It was just one incident, but a warning to critics that they should remain silent. But the government hadn't allowed for new technology. There were witnesses, and these witnesses were both the victims and the perpetrators. They had small cameras, mobile phones and access to the internet. So the evidence was there and now can be seen [included in Macrae's first film, *Sri Lanka's Killing Fields*].

Some of the material came from Sinhala sources, some from Tamil sources. Some of the execution and atrocity footage was filmed by the perpetrators themselves. Some of it was filmed by Tamil civilians, some of it was filmed by Tiger camera operators, who had no doubt expected to film the heroic exploits of their fighters but instead ended up recording the misery of the civilians — a misery in which the Tigers were themselves partly complicit through their use of civilians and human shields.

PROCESS

Channel 4 News began running some of the footage that was emerging and began the process that eventually led to my two films.

One initial short extract showed the execution of naked, bound prisoners; that was supplied by an organisation called Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka (JDS, an organisation of exiled Sinhala and Tamil journalists and media workers).

The Sri Lankan government said the evidence is faked, which is isn't. They claim the execution footage is faked. It is not. We have had it independently assessed by teams of video technicians and even a forensic pathologist to examine the nature of the wounds. They have all concluded that there is no evidence of manipulation or faking, and their assessment has been confirmed by a separate set of experts from the UN.

The Sri Lankan government knows this footage is genuine. In this footage and the many stills from the end of the war you can see soldiers filming in almost every photograph and film. The Sri Lankan government should have gathered all that footage in, and investigated what was going on. They haven't. That they have not done so speaks volumes because all the evidence is that these events were orchestrated and approved at the highest levels of the Sri Lankan government.

The regime has also claimed that we are apologists for the LTTE, a bizarre claim given that in the films we clearly accuse the LTTE of war crimes and crimes against humanity — as well as the government forces.

They claim, even more preposterously that we have been funded by the LTTE, a claim that seems to have been born of desperation. They have launched an international propaganda campaign, hiring Western PR companies, producing glossy documents and even an hour-long documentary in an attempt to discredit us.

• outsidertv.wordpress.com/callum-macrae

The Olympics and social cleansing

The second of three articles on the forthcoming Olympics, by Dan Rawnsley

In 2010 David Cameron claimed he wanted "the Olympics legacy [to] lift East London from being one of the poorest parts of the country to one that shares fully in the capital's growth and prosperity."

It is claimed the Olympic "legacy" will help regenerate five east London boroughs. The reality for working class residents is very different: displacement, gentrification and in the words of housing association chief executive officer Gill Brown, "social cleansing".

In Newham the "9,000 new homes, many affordable for local people" promised by Lord Coe have not materialised. Instead, the local council wrote to Brighter Futures housing association in Stoke-on-Trent offering them the opportunity to house 500 families.

Newham council says it cannot house people in private rental property because the housing market is starting to "overheat" due to the "buoyant young professionals market".

Jumping on the regeneration bandwagon, University Col-

lege London has said it will build a new campus on the site currently occupied by Carpenters Estate, the largest housing estate neighbouring the Olympic site.

Hackney residents began expressing concern for Hackney Marshes as early as 2003. In July 2003 Neale Coleman, an advisor to the London Mayor, informed a meeting set up by the Hackney Environment Forum that there was "no question of permanent or temporary facilities on any part of Hackney Marshes".

A condition had been attached to planning applications that the developing agency must provide land in exchange for common land and open space taken up by the Olympic developments. However, in 2005 Guy Nicholson, the Hackney Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration, informed residents that planners were defaulting on their obligation.

The London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Bill was altered to remove the imperative to provide land in exchange. Part of the Marshes will be tarmacked over to build a coach park. Another promise has been made that the land will be restored.

The picture of turn-a-profit development and broken promises is a familiar element of many so-called "mega-events". Brazil is now preparing to host the 2014 World Cup

and 2016 Olympic games. On 22 January São Paulo, one of the host cities for the World Cup, saw an estimated 6,000 people evicted from the Pinheirinho favela by the military police of São Paulo.

The 1988 Seoul Games saw 720,000 people displaced, the 1992 Barcelona games saw 2,500 evictions, the 1996 Atlanta Games saw 30,000 evictions, 2,700 were evicted for Athens 2004 and 1.5 million for the Beijing 2008 games. There were no reported evictions for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, but house prices more than doubled between 1996 and 2003 in the city with rents increasing by 40% between 1993 and 1998.

Between 1988 and 2008 the Olympic Games have caused the eviction and displacement of more than two million people.

How many will be added to this rising total by the 2012 London Olympics? In the midst of a housing crisis the labour movement should demand that the energy and resources being put into "developing" the Olympic boroughs (i.e. pricing out working class residents) should be poured in to a nation-wide project to construct social housing.

And tenants' groups resisting evictions must be given the full support of left-wing activists.

● <http://www.facebook.com/carvoice>

The heart of the “third camp”

In *Solidarity* 242, we began publishing a series of recollections and reflections from activists who had been involved with the “third camp” left in the United States — those “unorthodox” Trotskyists who believed that the Soviet Union was not a “workers’ state” (albeit a “degenerated” one), but an exploitative form of class rule to be as opposed as much as capitalism. They organised under the slogan “neither Washington nor Moscow.”

The assessment of the “third camp” tradition by the majority of the modern-day revolutionary left is bound up with the continuing holy terror of that “original sin”; many Trotskyist groups still see the remaining Stalinist states as some form of working-class rule, and even those that formally do not (such as the British SWP and its international satellites) have superimposed the template of Cold War “my-enemy’s-enemy-is-my-friend”-ism onto the modern world and see such forces as political Islam as progressive potential allies against the dominant (US) imperialism.

Retrospective assessment of the third camp tradition is also coloured by legitimate contempt for the political suicide of its most prominent theoretician and sometime-figurehead, Max Shachtman, who eventually became an apologist for US imperialism.

Workers’ Liberty has, over a number of decades, attempted to rediscover and re-examine the tradition of “third camp” socialism, and to attempt to learn from it. This symposium brings together the reflections of activists from both the “first generation” of third camp organisations — the Workers Party, which split from the American SWP in 1940 and became the Independent Socialist League in 1949, before entering the reformist Socialist Party of America in 1957 and dissolving — and the “second generation” — the Independent Socialist Clubs of America (founded in 1967 as a federation of loose third camp groupings on various college campuses which were founded some years earlier), and later the International Socialists (founded in 1968).

This week, we publish contributions from Herman Benson, one of the last surviving founder members of the 1939/40 Workers Party and former industrial editor of its paper *Labor Action*, and Gabe Gabrielsky, who was a member of the Young People’s Socialist League and later the International Socialists.

Longer versions of the contributions will be available to read online, at tinyurl.com/thirdcampsymposium.

Daniel Randall

By Herman Benson

The “Third Camp” originated with the Workers’ Party (“Shachtmanites”) in response to the outbreak of World War Two. Not a worked-out program or policy, it was essentially a slogan.

As such, it was intended to put as sharply and as thought-provoking as possible our opposition to what we denounced as the two warring imperialist camps. But it took on double significance. It made clear, in the context of world war, our clear opposition to the two rival social systems: capitalism versus the new social order of bureaucratic collectivism as represented by the Soviet Union under Stalin.

I should modify that statement slightly. Even before the Workers’ Party finally reached a consensus on bureaucratic collectivism as a social system, we agreed that, however you defined the Soviet Union, its invasion of Poland and the Baltic states and its attack on Finland were oppressive imperialist acts that we denounced, just as we denounced the imperialist acts of the capitalist powers.

And so, the slogan of Third Camp clearly distinguished us from Leon Trotsky, who still characterised the Soviet Union as a “workers’ state”, and saw its invasion into small capitalist countries as giving a bureaucratic impulse to the socialist revolution. And it distinguished us from the Socialist Workers’ Party [USA, no relation to the modern-day British group of the same name] whose Jim Cannon advised crudely that social revolutionaries should consider themselves the best soldiers in the Red Army.

As originally put forward by the Workers’ Party, there was no ambiguity or evasion in the concept of Third Camp. Against the two warring camps and against the two exploitive social systems was the third proletarian camp of socialist revolution.

In 1939/40, Leon Trotsky, the WP, and the SWP shared one prognosis for the years to come. We were all certain that, just as in the aftermath of World War One, World War Two would be followed by a powerful wave of revolution; proletarian, social revolution. At one point, in the debate between Trotsky and the WP, Trotsky even suggested that the outcome of the war and the coming revolutions might test the potential of the proletariat as a ruling class and the validity of Marxian socialism as a program.

But hopes for workers’ revolution proved illusory. The war ended with a clear victory for the Allied camp, followed by the long period of cold war between the two former allies:



Herman Benson (centre) at a “Eugene Debs Day” dinner, Chicago, 1960

the United States, still capitalist, and the Soviet Union, still under Stalin.

With the socialist revolution now a distant objective, the slogan of Third Camp lost its rallying, revolutionary, socialist, proletarian quality and became diffuse and shifting.

The Third Camp could no longer be presented as a workers’ revolutionary alternative to capitalism and Stalinism, and so its proponents sought policies and programs of action in opposition to the aims of the two main powers. They looked for a Third Camp in various regimes or social movements that tried to maintain a neutral role independent of the two: movements for the end of colonialism, Yugoslavia, India, etc. Nevertheless, the slogan of Third Camp could still have resonance: Neither Washington nor Moscow! It was the same slogan, but serving a new purpose.

But the world changed. A new period opened with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war: internal battles in newly liberated countries, rise of China, Arab Spring, terrorism.... Third Camp? Third? Against which two is the third now counterposed? In our new world, it seems to me, the notion of a Third Camp, having lost its revolutionary socialist soul, has become less a program of action and more a kind of mystical consolation for its adherents, a reassurance that somehow, somewhere, out there is a powerful social force that will turn our ideals of a just, democratic, peaceful society from a dream into a reality.

COMPLEX

What is involved here transcends clarification or definition of Third Camp in the complex period in which live and in which we seek to remain true to our ideals of social justice.

For me, once the Third Camp is stripped of its revolutionary proletarian heart, the discussion recalls what Leon Trotsky wrote in the early days of World War Two, not long before he was murdered:

“The second world war.... subjects the proletariat to a new and perhaps decisive test. If this war provokes, as we firmly believe, a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy on a far higher economic and cultural basis than in 1918.... If, however, it is conceded that the present war will provoke not revolution but a decline of the proletariat, then there remains another alternative: the further decay of monopoly capitalism, its further fusion with the state and the replacement of democracy wherever it still remained by a totalitarian regime... the eclipse of civilisation....

“If the world proletariat should actually prove incapable of fulfilling the mission placed upon it by the course of development, nothing else would remain except only to recognize that the socialist program based on the internal contradictions of capitalist society ended as a Utopia.” (From: ‘The USSR in War’ in *In Defence of Marxism*, 25 September 1939)

Obviously, the alternatives projected by Trotsky did not materialise. There was no proletarian revolution, nor was there “the eclipse of civilisation” in the form of a dominant authoritarian bureaucracy. But for Trotsky, the failure of the proletariat to take power after this war could pose the question of whether the proletariat was capable of fulfilling its “mission” and therefore whether the socialist program had proven to be a Utopia.

For Trotsky, the socialist programme and Marxism were inseparably linked. Marxism sees the achievement of socialism dependent upon the elevation of the proletariat into a ruling class. Trotsky’s line of thought could bring Marxism, but not necessarily socialism, into question as a Utopia. The “socialist programme,” however conceived, is not necessarily identical with proletarian revolution. Socialism as an ideology or programme preceded Marxism. The question remains: Is socialism sans proletarian power a Utopia?

I was involved in the “transforming” of the WP into the ISL. In fact, at the time, I was the organiser of the WP branch in New York City. In practice, by the time we changed our name, it was less a transformation than a relabeling. Without

revolutions in the world, America retained its democracy. It had not moved closer to fascism, which actually was in retreat. The idea that a small group of dedicated socialists could become a vanguard party leading the workers to power was obviously a dream. The change from “party” to “league” was a simple recognition of reality. There was no soul-searching discussion of the profound implications of that change in name. We drifted into it. The guiding thought was that the ISL would be not a party but a “tendency” to keep alive the idea of socialism (as we envisaged it) for future generations.

The ISL remained a sect, not only in size but in conception. Ideologically we still drew inspiration from Leninism and the Russian Revolution. We could hold two clashing ideas simultaneously: accept the reality that the notion of a vanguard leading the revolution was irrelevant in practice, and still believe in it as a principle for the indefinite, bright, future.

At the time, Ernie Erber proposed that we identify ourselves as a “small mass party,” which would have implied some leading coordinated participation in the social battles of the day. No one took that seriously. It seemed unrealistic. By that time our youth was vanishing. No more professional revolutionaries. Most WPers became parents with children to support. They went back to school, got their degrees, became professionals and academics. Some shifted to careers as union leaders. (My own main interest turned toward union democracy) Actually, our time as a distinctive tendency was up.

SECURE

Looking back, it is obvious to me that those who stayed with Cannon in the SWP felt more secure with a strict adherence with the accepted canon, and felt nervous over any heretical deviation.

Those who went with Shachtman into the WP were more open to new ideas. (Only relatively more open. We retained our own ideological limits on what we felt were basics.) We were younger. More of us were students and semi-skilled would-be intellectuals.

In the new WP, our line for members during the war was “into the factories and unions” where we became active in the campaign against the wartime no-strike pledge. More of the SWPers were already in unions. The SWP original guidance for members was to lie low and “preserve the cadres,” presumably to make sure they were still around when that great day dawned after the war. We ridiculed that line, as did Trotsky shortly before he was murdered.

For a few short years in the mid-50s, there was a spasm of renewed hope with the Khrushchev Revelations, the revolution against the invasion of Hungary, the beginning of the disintegration of the CP and the rise of the John Gates group in the CP. With the CP out of the way, its members presumably adrift, there was widespread discussion over the possibility of a new socialist realignment, discussions which involved AJ Muste, Gates, Shachtman/WP, and (I think) the Cochranes (by then out of the SWP.) [The “Cochranes” were a faction around Bert Cochran who had supported Michel Pablo in his dispute with James Cannon in the early 1950s. They were expelled from the SWP in 1954.]

For most of us in the WP, the Socialist Party seemed as the natural arena for drawing all these various tendencies together to build a broad, multi-tendency, influential, renewed socialist party modelled on the pre-First World War party of Debs. And so, the ISL dissolved to allow its members to join the SP and take part in the anticipated realignment. (For a short time after ISLers joined the SP, I was a member of its national committee. Among those who rejected the move was Hal Draper. He and a few supporters joined together in the International Socialists to remain true to their original revolutionary principles.)

Hopes for rejuvenation through the SP proved illusory. Disillusioned CPers never turned toward the SP; they mostly dropped out of organised politics or filtered into one or another limited social movement. The SP split. Mike Harrington led a left-wing minority out of the party, later to form the Democratic Socialists of America. The right-wing majority changed its name to Social Democrats, and finally disappeared. With the name orphaned and available for adoption, a tiny group of well-meaning but ineffectual former members picked it up. All those discussions and manoeuvres over a new beginning for a broad socialist movement dribbled away.

Finally, Max Shachtman found his own abortive “solution” to the issues posed at the war’s end.

Some ask whether Shachtman’s degeneration was the inevitable end-point of the politics he began developing in the 1930s. The very question recalls the mood in the Cannonite SWP at the time: depart from the bible, and you go down the slippery slope to hell. Shachtman’s distinctive “politics” of the late 1930s condemned Soviet Union’s role in the war and

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Finding my way to the third camp left

By Gabe Gabrielsky

In 1958, the third camp Independent Socialist League (ISL) dissolved, and most of its members went into the social-democratic Socialist Party.

The youth organisation of the ISL, the Young Socialist League, followed suit and its members joined the youth group of the Socialist Party, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL).

At the time, the Cuban Revolution was brand new and what it was all about was of considerable moment to college aged liberals and radicals. In 1963, when I was 20, I got into a discussion at a party with a young YPSL member about Cuba. I was so unused to thinking in terms of social movements and the idea of ordinary people being historical agents that I found his arguments all but incomprehensible. He sold me a copy of *New Politics*, a third camp theoretical journal, that had a symposium on Cuba — but if anything, the written arguments were even more incomprehensible to me than had been my conversation.

I spent some time trying to locate the Socialist Party, which, unbeknownst to me, in the winter of 1964, was in the midst of a faction fight. I attended a Communist Party forum, and a forum organised by the then pro-Stalinist *Monthly Review*. I was put off by the pro-Soviet politics and could make neither head nor tail of the sectlets leafletting outside. I also attended a forum of the orthodox Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party.

At the time I was working as a billing clerk for a major music publisher in Manhattan. I eventually found the YPSL through serendipity. The guy sitting at the desk behind me was a YPSLer, though it took several weeks of circumspect small talk to figure that out. Once I did, I was ready to join, but things were a mess in the SP and the YPSL. It was an election year and the Party divided on the question of whether to support Lyndon Johnson's Presidential campaign against Barry Goldwater. The left wing majority of the Party was propagandistically for a labour party, though Party notables like Norman Thomas, Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph and Michael Harrington were busy barnstorming for Johnson.

That is the swamp I walked into. This was at the same time that these same personalities were involved in a famous conflict with SDS, then the youth wing of the social democratic League for Industrial Democracy. At the time, despite the turmoil that it was going through, YPSL was still significantly larger than SDS.

I moved into a left wing YPSL commune on the lower East Side, where I got a very intense socialist education in very short order, which included reading the first edition of Hal Draper's classic pamphlet, *The Two Souls of Socialism*.

Over the summer of 1964, I got a summer job out of town and lost contact with YPSL. When I returned to Manhattan and went to Socialist Party headquarters I learned that the leadership of YPSL had been suspended and its files confiscated by the Party, presumably because the youth were too radical. Meanwhile, out in California, the Free Speech Movement was erupting on the Berkeley campus of the University of California.

Jobless, I moved back with my parents in southern New Jersey and that Christmas holiday the remnants of YPSL met in Philadelphia and organised itself into a formation called the American Socialist Organizing Committee (ASOC). I promptly lost contact with ASOC after its founding confer-

ence, but at the same time SDS was becoming more publicly visible, as was student opposition to the war in Vietnam. I was instrumental in organising an independent left student group at the Rutgers campus in Camden, New Jersey.

Several months later I ran across someone trying to place quantities of ASOC's magazine in a leftist book store in Philadelphia, and I ended up bookending my affiliation with ASOC, attending its dissolution convention in New York that Easter weekend.

Affiliates were urged to organise local third camp socialist clubs, and in short order we had formed a loose federation with the Berkeley Independent Socialist Club, called the Independent Socialist Clubs of America (ISCA). Meanwhile, SDS was growing by leaps and bounds. Many Independent Socialist Clubs were so small that they really were not in much of a position to do much independently, and so many independent socialists became active in SDS. I helped to organise an ISC in Washington DC, and was involved in several SDS chapters in DC as well.

SDS

SDS collapsed in 1969. Most of its members were liberal kids who were lost to politics because of the faction fight that ensued, but a handful of SDS chapters had third camp politics and significant minorities in several other SDS chapters were third campers.

These folks came together with the ISCA (I think it was in Ann Arbor, though it may have been in Madison. I can't recall, as we had conventions in both places), and they formed the International Socialists or IS.

My own historically forgotten contribution to this was my opposition to the change of the name of the organisation from Independent Socialist to International Socialists. It is most certainly not that I was opposed to it politically, but I did think it was sectarian. It was one thing for a British group, coming out of a culture of a mass labour party, to openly characterise itself as "international". It was quite another, I thought, for Americans just coming out of the McCarthy era, to adopt such a moniker.

At the time, as the name choosing was supposed to be fun and the last event at a long and tiring convention, Mike Parker viewed my opposition as a disruptive attempt to keep people from going home in a timely way, though it was inconsequential enough that Mike has no memory of it. I had tremendous respect for the intellectual heavies of the IS, people like Kim Moody, Mike Parker, Joel Geier, Sy Landy and Joanne Landy. They always treated me as a comrade though I never felt their intellectual equal. This never stopped me from taking exception to them when I disagreed but I was constantly getting the shit kicked out of me intellectually.

After that convention I relocated to central New Jersey where my wife was attending graduate school at Rutgers. Hard on the heels of that convention was a strike at General Motors. A strike school was being conducted at the Rutgers Labor Center, where the Shachtmanite leadership there was open to trying to create a dialogue between auto worker militants and student radicals. Out of this we recruited several young United Auto Workers (UAW) militants. We had an IS branch in central Jersey, which included several Rutgers students and young UAW militants.

I think that there was a real distinction between the ISCA and the IS which hardly ever gets mentioned. I certainly felt it at the time of the "name change", which I always viewed as something considerably more than a mere name change.

tariat as the key force for social change. But he considered himself a "realist." The failure of socialist revolution and the challenge from totalitarianism convinced him that the proletarian force was to be found not in the world of imagination, but in powerful, tangible, institutions. The quest for a revolutionary proletarian vanguard proved to be illusory. The proletariat as a third camp clearly opposed to the others never materialised, and turned into a kind of mystical hope. And so, in what he saw as the real world, he found the proletariat existing as a real force and with real power in the existing mass labour organisations.

In practice, as he saw it, that power was wielded by the dependably stable labour bureaucracy. Even though my personal relations with Shachtman remained cordial, he was cold to my preoccupation with union democracy, which meant a defence of democratic rights of insurgents against labour leaders. He saw the proletariat, embodied in the existing workers' organisations as a key force in resisting what he felt was the "dominant" danger of the time: Stalinist totalitarianism. No more third camp. So Shachtman evolved after the end of World War Two.

I see a policy analogous to Shachtman's, but on the left, in those who, looking for a substitute for the proletariat, find it in "progressive" forces, like the Russian and Chinese autocrats, who oppose the "dominant" imperialism.

In the debates of 1939/40, Trotsky argued that the Soviet

When the ISCA was first started, the so-called "clipping book" had been out about a year. The official name of the clipping book was *An Introduction to Independent Socialism* and it was a collection of all the May pamphlet issues of *Labor Action* that had been published during the 50s. They really delineated what Independent Socialism was all about. The clipping book was a very limited edition of 300 copies. Perhaps most important was the specially written introduction in which Draper argues that Independent Socialism was an entirely new synthesis of socialist thought and ideas, something which, Draper argued, had happened very seldom in socialist history.

Nearly everyone in the ISCA was aware of the history of the ISL, the Workers' Party and its split from the SWP. That was one change between the ISCA and the IS, as I think when the IS started we recruited a lot of ex SDSers who were not as familiar with ISL history as were the ISCAers, most of whom had come out of the YPSL and many of whom had been in the YSL, the youth group of the ISL.

There were also copies of Shachtman's pamphlet, *The Fight for Socialism*, around. This had been published by the WP shortly after the war and was a good example of how the WP tried to be a small mass party. It was basically an exposition of classical Marxist and third camp ideas written at about an 8th grade level in an effort to attract blue collar workers with limited educations. At the other end of the spectrum the WP also published *The Struggle for the New Course*, probably Shachtman's best written work and an historical explanation of the rise of Stalinism in Russia. We also pushed stuff from Britain such as Tony Cliff's *State Capitalism in Russia* and stuff from the Libertarian Book Club, which was an anarcho-syndicalist British outfit.

I was one of the first people to "industrialise", not out of any ideological commitment, but because I was a college drop-out who needed the best paying job he could find. The industrialisation experience was one of the things that drove me away from the IS.

I worked in an auto parts plant in New Jersey, a kind of backwater local. Every Friday I would drive into Manhattan to attend an IS meeting and their discussions of the American working class seemed like a fantasy to me having little to do with my day-to-day work experience.

That said, I tend to agree with Draper's assessment that Independent Socialism was a new synthesis. Even in Jersey, I had discussions with other young workers who were in a variety of radical sects and our discussions seemed to bear very little relationship to what we had to do every day on the job. There was a kind of Cold War political backwardness among older workers that fortunately disappeared as my own generation came of age and began to take the reins of leadership in the labour movement.

When Draper left the IS, my political mentor and Draper's peer Stan Weir barnstormed the country trying to keep the organisation together, though I think Draper's predictions were essentially correct; in fairly short order, the IS became more and more sectarian to the point where only a couple of years later Stan more or less threw in the towel and gradually withdrew from activity in the organisation.

● Gabe Gabrielsky was a member of the YPSL and later the IS, leaving the organisation in 1973. Since then he has been active in various trade union and political struggles, including supporting Green Party electoral campaigns. He has also been active in Occupy Wall Street.

Heart of "third camp"

From page 9

questioned its character as a "workers' state". Shachtman's views were shared by others: Hal Draper, Joe Carter, Irving Howe, Manny Garrett (Geltman), Stanley Plastrick (Judd), Julie Jacobson, and others (including, later, Mike Harrington) who all broke with Shachtman and "inevitably" went their own individual, disparate ways.

Actually, the idea that Russia was a new bureaucratic collectivist society was first advanced by Carter and Garrett, in opposition to Shachtman, who came around later.

Shachtman shifted course and developed the politics rejected by the left only after the end of World War Two and the failure of socialist revolution to develop. His left-wing critics have measured the late Shachtman against the accepted orthodoxy (which was his orthodoxy) of yesterday without ever subjecting their own orthodoxy to the test of world events of the last 150 years or more.

(I should say that what follows is not based upon substantive discussions with Shachtman, but on impressions I gathered during many informal personal meetings with him.)

To the very end, Shachtman considered himself a Marxist and never abandoned the Marxian conception of the prole-

Union remained a workers' state, "degenerated", but a workers' state, as long as property was nationalised. (At one point, as I remember, he was convinced that any attempt to restore private property would be massively resisted by the Russian workers.) We replied that no property form guaranteed power to workers, who could exert their power only through democracy. This idea stayed with me and resounded through the years. I took the idea one step further. I became convinced that, as far as one could see into the future, no change in the form of property ownership will erase the conflict among contending social groups. As far as we can see, the need will continue to defend people below from the administrators, bureaucrats, and privileged strata above. From that standpoint, the test is not property forms but democracy, which provides the means of that defence.

And, in the context of this discussion, the position of those who look toward authoritarian Russia and China, and the like, as "progressive" allies in the battle for... what?... is not only wrong, it is directly counter to what I believe, and is repellent to me.

● Herman Benson joined the Socialist Party's Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) in 1930 aged 15. He was a founding member of the Workers Party, a member of its National Committee and labour editor of its paper, *Labor Action*. He was a founder of the Association for Union Democracy [www.uniondemocracy.org] and its first Executive Director.

Southampton unions must make Labour keep its promises

By Darren Bedford

Trade unions have described the electoral wipeout of the Tories from Southampton City Council as “the chickens coming home to roost”.

The Tory council, under the leadership of Royston Smith, pursued an aggressive cuts agenda, targeting both local services and pay and conditions for council employees. The cuts sparked a high-profile industrial battle which saw workers take months’ worth of strike action. The campaign had an unusually high-levels of grassroots participation and

rank-and-file control of the direction of the strike.

Despite the action, the council’s attempt to impose new, worse, contracts on its staff was ultimately successful and unions settled into a months-long trench warfare with council bosses involving ongoing actions short of strikes.

Unite and Unison both have close links with the Labour Party locally and saw voting out the Tory leadership of the council as a key political step towards breaking the industrial deadlock.

Unite regional secretary John Rowse said: “Southampton voters have

delivered their verdict that cuts do not work and sent the party addicted to austerity packing.

“The campaign to rid this city of the cuts scourge was a success because working people and their unions joined forces to unseat a council leadership that was out of touch with the needs of Southampton.

“We urge Labour to now work with the workforce and their unions to begin the urgent duty of delivering ... strong public services, fairness at work and thriving communities.”

Prior to the election, a statement from Unison said: “Southampton is not a

‘normal’ Conservative-run council. It has become a council in which Royston Smith has, in effect, taken on the role of elected mayor. All the decisions he makes have one objective – to help the Conservative remain in political control and to advance his political career.”

The Labour Party made pre-election commitments to council unions to begin a phased reversal of the Tories’ pay cuts. If they are to be held to that promise, continued trade-union pressure will be essential.

Tilbury dock workers strike

45 workers at the Enterprise Distribution Centre, which unloads paper reels from incoming vessels at the Tilbury docks in Essex, struck on Monday 7 May, marking the first walkout at the docks since 1989.

The workers, who are members of Unite, are striking against the arbitrary imposition of new contracts which could see them lose up to £2,500.

Unite official Jane Jeffery said: “Members are annoyed at the complete lack of negotiation and consultation. Since the ballot for strike action, we have had no formal communication with the company.

“We want to hold meaningful and genuine talks with the management on this issue. This is a 24-hour strike — the first by the dockers in 23 years.

“More strikes could be on the cards, if there is no movement in this dispute.”

Support East London school strike!

Workers at the Central Foundation Girls School in East London are set to strike again on Friday 11 May as they fight job losses, pay cuts and workload increases.

Following a solid strike on 25 April, members of Unison and the National Union of Teachers are gearing up for another walkout.

Negotiations between unions, the school management and the local authority over the budget cuts behind the attacks have been ongoing, and staff will meet on Wednesday to discuss the latest proposals.

• Messages of solidarity should be sent to Unison rep Jean Lane at [jlane@central.towerhamlets](mailto:jlane@central.towerhamlets.sch.uk)

.sch.uk and NUT rep Sheila McGregor at smcgregor@central.towerhamlets.sch.uk.

• *Tower Hamlets Class Struggle*, the AWL industrial bulletin for education workers in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, can be read and downloaded at tinyurl.com/thbulletin4.

Remploy workers fight job cuts

By a GMB member

Remploy workers will mobilise for national protests and a parliamentary lobby on 9 May as their campaign to save their jobs continues.

The government plans to close 36 of the 54 Remploy sites, leading to nearly 2,000 compulsory job losses.

Remploy was established by the post-war Labour government to provide protected employment for disabled people. Of the 1,752 workers set to lose their jobs in the first wave

of closures, over 1,500 are disabled. Trade unions fear that the remaining 18 sites are already earmarked for closure and will follow in a second wave soon after.

Phil Davies, national secretary of the GMB union, said: “This lobby of Parliament and the demonstrations around the country are a measure of the massive public support for continued funding of the Remploy factories.

“It is now clear that this government will use the money that was earmarked to support the direct employment of disabled people to privatise its

Employment Services business.

“It is outrageous that the government can take away the jobs of disabled workers ... to carry out an ideologically motivated privatisation.”

• **Workers will protest outside Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offices on Tothill Street (London SW1H 9NA) from 10.30am before assembling for a march in Old Palace Yard, Westminster. A lobby of MPs will be conducted from 2.30-4pm. Labour MP Ian Lavery is sponsoring the lobby.**

Reinstate Dayna Nembhard!

By a Tubeworker supporter

Tube worker Dayna Nembhard was racially abused in a branch of fast-food outlet KFC after a shift at work on London Underground. She defended herself, was arrested but later released without charge.

Nonetheless her boss demanded CCTV footage from the KFC and took witness statements. Dayna has since been sacked.

Dayna was not at work when the incident took place, and not in uniform; and the “incident” consisted of Dayna defending herself against racial abuse. Yet London Underground have seen fit to dismiss her.

Dayna’s union, the RMT is demanding reinstatement, not just compensation.

LU makes much of its reputation as a diverse employer, but its record leaves much to be desired. LU was found guilty of racial discrimination by an employment tribunal for sacking Jerome Bowes off the Bakerloo Line in 2008. RMT rep Elaine Holness, spoke out about LU’s discrimination at

Dayna Nembhard

Jerome’s tribunal. Her white manager then put in a grievance, accusing her — a black woman — of racially harassing him! This treatment eventually cost Elaine her job.

In 2008, RMT discovered LU was paying out an average of £4,000 a day in employment tribunal settlements. That shows that LU was systematically discriminating against and mistreating workers, paying out compensation as if it was a “business cost”.

LU will expect Dayna’s case to go to employment tribunal. They will be happy to pay out compensation.

RMT activists are planning a campaign, up to and including strike action, to tell LU bosses that they will not get away with paying Dayna off. They must reinstate her.

More action in Tube Lines

By an RMT member

Tube Lines workers, who provide maintenance and emergency services across London Underground, will begin an overtime ban on Wednesday 9 May.

The action follows their three-day strike from April 24-27, and is part of a fight to win pensions equality.

Tube Lines workers want their pensions to be raised to the same level of other Transport for London em-

ployees. They are also demanding equal travel privileges.

The RMT estimates that up to 50 trains were cancelled as a result of the April strike. Only two trained Emergency Response Unit personnel were on site to attend to a collapsed tunnel on the Bakerloo Line.

The overtime ban is due to continue until 23 May, but union reps will meet on 16 May to discuss extending the action beyond an overtime ban.

Serco, privatisation, and Alex Salmond’s SNP

Scotland
By Dale Street



The SNP government in Holyrood has announced the privatising of ferry services connecting the Orkney and Shetland islands with the mainland.

The services are currently run by Northlink, a subsidiary of the state-owned David MacBrayne Ltd. From July onwards the services will be run by Serco. The contract, worth £243 million, will run for six years.

Serco has experience of running just one other ferry crossing — the Woolwich Free Ferry across the River Thames.

But it has a well-established record of bidding for all-

and-sundry public sector contracts, both in Britain and abroad: railways, prisons, health services, schools, speed cameras, and Royal Navy and RAF contracts.

Northlink staff will transfer to Serco under TUPE legislation but that provides only limited protection for the terms and conditions of employment of staff who transfer from one company to another.

As an article in the *Argyll News* has put it:

“If the Serco proposal is to save the taxpayer money and return a profit for its shareholders, something has to give. Its business plan cannot but impact on staffing levels at some later stage after the TUPE transfer.”

For certain, other ferry services will now be put out to tender. Despite opposition from the unions the SNP government is pressing ahead with plans to put the Clyde and Hebridean ferry services out to tender — a much bigger contract than the Northern Isles one.

The unions will need to combine ongoing campaigning against the SNP’s Ferries Review and defending jobs and

terms and conditions in CalMac (the David MacBrayne subsidiary which runs the services at the moment).

Last year the SNP delayed announcing the outcome of the tendering process for the Gourock-Dunoon ferry service until after the Holyrood elections had been held.

Although CalMac won the tender, their bid involved replacing car ferries by foot-passenger ones, closing the ticket offices in both ports, and substantial redundancies amongst the workforce.

This year the SNP sat on their announcement about privatisation the Northern Isles ferry services until the day after the local authority elections had been held.

(They claim, unconvincingly, that the announcement was delayed because civil servants had to go into “purdah” because of the elections.)

Revelations about chummying up with News International’s Rupert Murdoch one week. Privatising a publicly owned service the next. Welcome to the real face of Alex Salmond’s SNP.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Stop the banks strangling Europe! French and Greek elections show current policy is dead-end

By Gerry Bates

Labour movements across Europe should mobilise to demand that EU leaders drop the drastic cuts programme imposed on Greece. Results from Greece's election on 6 May have shown that the cuts are untenable.

There had been much agitation trying to blackmail Greeks into voting for New Democracy (Tories) or Pasok, or else face expulsion from the eurozone. Those two parties, which had accepted the EU/ECB/IMF cuts packages and sustained the "technocrat" government of Lucas Papademos, previously dominated Greek politics. Yet they got only 32% between them. ND got 19%, down from 34% in

Alexis Tsipras, leader of left-wing Syriza, who got 17%

2009; Pasok, 13%, down from 44% in 2009.

The left-wing coalition Syriza, which rejects the cuts, does not advocate quitting the eurozone, but advocates calling the EU leaders' bluff, more than tripled its vote from 4.6% in 2009 to 17% this time.

The destructiveness of the cuts imposed by the EU, ECB, and IMF is shown by the rise of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, which won 7% of the poll after scoring only a token vote in 2009. The right-wing nationalist anti-cuts split-off from ND, Independent

Greeks, also scored well, like the far-right Front National in France's poll.

The election result in France, where incoming president François Hollande has promised to amend the EU's fiscal treaty, and the forced resignation of militantly neo-liberal Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte (23 April), have thrown economic policy in the eurozone further into flux.

As well as supporting defensive battles against cuts, the left across Europe should formulate a programme of its own, and intervene in the labour movement to develop mobilisations and debates on the Euro-wide issues

● More: centre pages

NHS plc: the shape of things to come

By Sam Ruby

Under its contract with the NHS, Circle Healthcare, the private firm which runs Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, is allowed to claim the first £2 million of any annual surplus, plus a percentage of any further surplus (a quarter of the remaining surplus between £2-6 million, and a third of that between £6-10 million).

The *Health Service Journal (HSJ)* has published a report (3 May) saying the hospital will need to make surpluses of at least £70 million over the next decade if it is to clear its debts and meet Circle's contracted share.

Yet in the past decade, the hospital has never made an annual surplus of more than £600,000, sug-

gesting that very severe cuts will be needed to meet this target, the report said.

Circle are talking up the "efficiency" savings they plan to make. They say the number of patients staying in hospital for more than 10 days has dropped. But, says Tracy Lambert of Unison, Hinchingbrooke, these figures are misleading — the hospital has fewer long-stay patients than others in the county.

Circle began its 10-year management franchise in February in what is seen as a potential model for other hospitals across the country.

This private company is beginning to organise the hospital to get, in the long-term, at least *some* profit.

The labour movement needs to monitor and resist measures that undermine the interests of patients.

Health Alarm

11:59

Mobilise to save the NHS

PROTEST AGAINST CARE UK

**Private profiteers in the NHS
Wednesday 30 May, 5-6.30pm
St Vincent's House, 21 Great
Winchester Street, EC2N 2JA**

Cameron is still in hock to the Murdochs

By Pat Murphy

It's no surprise that the Tories are taking most of the political heat from the revelations surrounding News International.

The fact that ex-News of the World editor Andy Coulson was Cameron's adviser and the constant reminders that Rebekah Brooks and Elizabeth Murdoch are neighbours and close social friends of the Camerons (in the Chipping Norton set) all fix the Tory-Murdoch mutual-backscratching link in the public mind.

But Cameron will be frustrated that the other parties are not taking their share of the blame. After all New Labour courted Murdoch if anything more shamelessly. In fact the historic and more natural tendency of News International to support the Tories required Labour, if they wanted to win tabloid support, to be more

self-abasing and craven about it.

To some extent the other main parties have escaped blame by luck. Miliband is a new leader who can put some distance between himself and his predecessors. Clegg took over a party that never had much chance of winning the support of NI papers. The Lib Dems are also protected by the *Daily Telegraph's* secret taping of Business Secretary, Vince Cable, saying he would do what he could to prevent Murdoch taking over BSkyB. The tape lost Cable his job, but it also saved his reputation.

Labour's immunity from the Leveson fallout is also down to some decision-making. As soon as the phone-hacking scandal broke Miliband publicly condemned it and made it clear he would be breaking from past Labour dalliances with News International. Applauded as brave at the time, this shift

James Murdoch and David Cameron

had actually been made easier by Gordon Brown's public fallout with the corporation.

What is less obvious is why the Tory leadership has made no clear attempt to distance themselves decisively from Murdoch and the continuing political damage which has followed. This is, after all, a party renowned for its ruthlessness, summed up in the brutal dispatch of three-time election-winning Thatcher from the leadership in 1990 and captured dramatically in the 1980s TV drama *House of Cards*. Whatever prevents Cameron from delivering

the final political kick to the News International corporation in Britain, it isn't morality or loyalty.

Ye they are clearly not ready to break the umbilical cord. The refusal of Tory MPs on the Culture and Media Select Committee to agree on a verdict that Murdoch was not a fit and proper person to run a major media outlet is the latest evidence of that. Whatever the procedural argument put by Louise Mensch (that the judgement was outside the Committee's remit) the impression conveyed is that the Tories remain in hock to and in the service of

Murdoch. In the aftermath of that report Cameron and other cabinet members were under pressure to state whether they thought Murdoch was a fit person to run a major British paper. They studiously refused.

The *News of the World* may have closed and the BSkyB deal collapsed, but News International still exists and owns the *Sun*, the biggest selling daily and most widely-read paper in Britain, together with the influential *Times* and *Sunday Times*. The Tories have their support and don't want to lose it. Neither do they want to risk being on the wrong end of future exposures, scandals or policy parodies as they seek re-election in 2015. Perhaps they hope for some poison to be thrown in Labour's direction when the dust settles and the *Sun*, in particular, re-establishes itself.

Not only is News International not finished, neither is the Leveson Inquiry.

Shortly after we go to press both Andy Coulson and Rebekah Brooks are due to appear before the Inquiry. Brooks has promised to show Leveson dozens of text messages and emails between herself and Cameron from the time when the crisis first broke.

Whatever Coulson says on his appearance, days of media discussion of the links between News International and the Tories will follow. Both Brooks and Coulson know where the bodies are buried. Fearing that they will reveal too much, Cameron has asked Leveson to let ministers see their written evidence in advance.

The Tory dilemma was neatly summed up by Nick Cohen in last week's *Observer*: "We are in the absurd position where the Conservatives dare not stop fawning over Murdoch now for fear that he will reveal how they fawned over him in the past".