



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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FIVE YEARS TOO MANY

SEE
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CUTS, WAGE FREEZE, NHS SELL-OFFS

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.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

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

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
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- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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Universities: a special boom

By Gerry Bates

In 2010, when the Tory government reduced universities' direct funding and replaced it with a licence to charge students £9,000 fees, it looked like that move might bring cuts in universities.

In fact universities are about the only area of apparently public endeavour to have had a boom — of a special sort.

The *Financial Times* (17 April) reports: "Across London, from the Olympic Park in the east to White City in the west, universities are breaking new ground... [with] campus extensions, building projects and acquisitions already worth a combined total of more than £4 billion".

It is not just in London. Mike Boxall, a management consultant specialising in higher education, told the *Guardian* (18 March): "Almost every campus you go to is a building site".

For example, York university "is in the middle of an unprecedented period of expansion and renewal... 20 new buildings on the original campus and... a campus expansion".

Cardiff university plans to "transform a largely disused former industrial space into to a full-blown new campus". Swansea university "has enjoyed a period of tremendous growth" and has started "the creation of the Bay Campus, a brand new £450 million de-



21st century University. Artist's impression of York Uni's new engineering building, part of a huge programme of expansion

velopment on the eastern approach to the city, together with the transformation of our existing campus".

Coventry university has a "master plan" to redevelop a large chunk of the city's centre currently occupied by four major council buildings. At Warwick university, on the edge of the same city, "new science buildings are currently under development along with a new extension to Warwick Business School". Sussex university has an expansion scheme which, it claims, will create more than 2,000 new jobs at the university and in local suppliers.

Huddersfield university is erecting large new buildings for its law school and its school of music, humanities and media. Glasgow university will expand its campus into a new 14-acre area.

Government controls on student numbers are to be removed in 2015-16, and the government reckons on 60,000 more people entering higher education straight away.

Some universities — Aston, University College London, Bristol, Exeter — already increased their intake by more than 35 per cent just in 2011-3. Now Essex University plans to increase its student numbers by 50% between 2013 and 2019.

This is a boom coming not from a public decision to put more resources into higher education, but from market forces mediated through student fees. 70% of university bosses told Mike Boxall's consulting company that for them "government policies that undermine market opportunities" are "a major concern".

More and more employers use applicants' university records as a cheap-and-easy measure of their willingness to jump through hoops, usually more or less regardless of what the applicants are supposed to have learned at university and whether they remember any of it.

School-leavers, reasonably enough, see getting through university as a necessary step to finding a halfway stable job. Again, the content of the courses comes second to the job-market credentials.

Each university piles in the students and seeks to give its campus extra job-market prestige by hiring big-name professors, while delegating much of the actual teaching to harassed casual staff. After all, what the students learn is secondary: what matters is that they come out with a prestigious certificate.

The competition is likely, over time, to separate universities even more into different "leagues".

The consultants found 83% of university bosses predicting a "super league" of maybe as few as half a dozen universities; and at the other end of the market many expected "a significant number of institutional failures and bankruptcies" and "significant rationalisation through mergers and takeovers".

London students strike for lower rents

By Omar Raii

Students at UCL and SOAS (universities in London) are fighting back against years of increased rents and worsening living conditions with the best tool available to tenants, the rent strike.

Events began at UCL where there has been a year of student activists fighting the UCL Cut the Rent campaign, set up to reverse UCL's year on year above-inflation rent increases that have served to put so many students off studying at the university.

Many of the residence halls cost well over £150 a week to live in and more and more of the halls are

becoming outsourced. Rent strikes were discussed and, due to the propagandising effect this has had, students at Hawkridge House (a residence hall for UCL students) have come out fighting this term.

Following massive delays to building works, many students have had to experience serious disruption (during exam revision time), with some students having to constantly close their curtains for privacy (with builders working outside), leading to decreased light.

This, along with the overall deteriorating condition in the halls including an infestation of mice, led to dozens of students withholding their rent. Almost immediately UCL made

concessions, agreeing to delay the building works until after exams. Following a continuation of the rent strike, the college agreed to give compensation to the students.

This has galvanised students at other UCL halls (Max Rayne Hall and Campbell House) to take similar action. All the campaigns are ongoing.

At SOAS's contracted-out halls, similar appalling conditions have led residents to withhold over £100,000 in rent. This includes cockroach and rodent infestations, water outages, excessive delays to repairs, reports of bullying and staff misconduct not being taken seriously, staff and security entering rooms/flats without notice, accessibility is-

sues (including a ramp being closed off for two days and the accessible toilet being used as a store cupboard).

For this students have to pay over £150.

Students have filed an appeal (with thus far no agreement on compensation) and are hoping to continue their action until they see concessions.

When students take action against privatisation as well as unacceptable and expensive living conditions, there is an enormous potential to get real results.

Housing has become a live issue in the student movement. Let's hope action at UCL and SOAS will spark a bigger nationwide fightback. Organising works!

A Labour minority government? Yes, but with left policies!

By Colin Foster

Probably neither Tories nor Labour will have a clear majority after 7 May. The new administration will be either a coalition, or a minority government dependent on deals with other parties.

Constitutionally, David Cameron remains prime minister until a new government is formed, however badly he does on 7 May.

Coalitions and minority governments have been common in British political history, and are the rule rather than the exception in many countries. The difference this time is that the jockeying for position after election day may be long.

Tory leader David Cameron centres his case against Labour on the claim that a Labour government would be controlled by its deals with the SNP; Labour leader Ed Miliband says he is “not going to have a Labour government if it means deals or coalitions with the SNP”.

But there are many more dimensions.

1. If Labour comes out from 7 May as the biggest party, but without a majority, in the unions and in the labour movement we should argue for a Labour minority government which presses on with all its better promises (which we should seek union pressure to improve), seeks to build working-class support by doing so, and dares the other parties to bring it down.

A Labour administration which legislates only compromises with the Lib-Dems or Tories would have a longer life; but it would not serve the working class even in the most minimal way, and it would damage the labour movement politically.

2. A minority government can rule for a sizeable time without a single formal arrangement like the Labour-Liberal pact of 1977-8. The Labour minority government which made that pact remained in office for a good while after the pact broke down in summer 1978.

Parties will allow a minority government to win votes of confidence because



Ed Balls: promised cuts

they don't want to be seen forcing a new election. Also, they know that a minority government gives them power to block measures they don't like and push measures they do like which they may lose with an election.

Ed Miliband's declares that a Labour minority government will put forward a Labour's “Queen's Speech” (plan) and stand or fall on it. Good: but then getting the measures into law is another matter again. For that, a Labour minority government would depend on getting this party's vote for this

measure and that party's vote for another. “Deals” in that minimal sense are unavoidable: the question is which, and how.

3. We should worry about Labour-Lib-Dem or Labour-Tory deals as much as about Labour-SNP deals.

Labour-SNP deals have the downside of boosting the SNP and making it harder for Labour to recover in Scotland. But many Labour leaders, especially in 2011, have dropped obvious hints that they would like Labour-Lib-Dem deals, or even a coalition.

RIGHT-WING

Such deals would tie Labour to the most right-wing strand in its own political make-up.

And if Ed Miliband wants to push through the cuts which Ed Balls has promised, or full Trident replacement? The SNP will vote against, even if they're making equal cuts in Scotland. Even the Lib-Dems may decide to tack left to regain support.

There is a real risk that a Labour minority government, anxious to look “re-

sponsible”, will pull itself to the right through deals with the Tories.

4. A Labour minority government would produce new pressure on left Labour MPs. Under Blair's “control-freakery”, paradoxically, there were more back-bench revolts by Labour MPs than ever before, and with impunity. Under a Labour minority government, Labour leaders would increase pressure on left MPs to back government policies, including bad deals with the Lib-Dems and others. The labour movement should back left MPs standing up for working-class principles.

5. We should also worry about Tory-Labour deals, i.e. a Labour opposition providing a Tory minority government with the votes it needs to get through right-wing measures opposed by the SNP, the Lib-Dems, Plaid, and even, ultra-opportunistically, by UKIP.

On 14 January Labour whipped its MPs, with only five dissenters, to help vote through George Osborne's

“budget responsibility charter”. Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls said that doing otherwise would allow the Tories to brand Labour as “irresponsible”.

Imagine what those fears of being called “irresponsible” could do to Balls under a Tory minority government. Remember when the Labour leaders in 1961, fearful of seeming “weak on defence”, suspended MPs like future Labour Party leader Michael Foot for voting against the then Tory government's military budget.

6. If the Tories come out clearly ahead on 7 May, the Labour right will move to replace Ed Miliband. (By Yvette Cooper? Who knows?) We should prepare for a left challenge in that leadership contest.

7. The only way Labour can win back ground from the SNP in any near future is by adopting policies clearly to the left of it. Pretending to be almost as Scottish nationalist as the SNP can only help the real Scottish nationalists win support.

The student vote

By Gerry Bates

In 2010, despite the hype, only 23 percent of final year students at 30 “top” universities planned to vote Lib Dem.

The Lib Dems were in third place, with the Tories in the lead. At this election the Lib Dem figure has collapsed to six percent, while the Greens have shot from 6 to 25 percent. Labour and the Tories are neck-and-neck on 31 percent.

Some of the figures provided by the graduate-focused research company High Fliers are what you'd expect. 81 percent of Labour voters went to a state school, but only 48 percent of Tory voters. Others are more surprising.

In addition to Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster and Sheffield, Labour is well ahead at Warwick, Oxford and UCL.

• More: www.workersliberty.org/studentvote

NUM connects with Ukrainian miners

By Rhodri Evans

Britain's National Union of Mineworkers has recently sent two delegations to meet miner trade unionists in Ukraine.

One was to an all-Ukraine miners' union congress in Kyiv on 21 April, the other to a meeting with West Donbas union leaders on 28 March.

The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign here comments that this sets “an example to our trade union movement in providing real solidarity with our brothers and sisters of the Ukrainian labour movement”.

NUM secretary Chris Kitchen has written to the TUC:

“As the TUC will be reporting on developments in Ukraine I wish to set out the position of the NUM.

“We support the Ukrainian miners and trade unions in their official support for preserving the national integrity of a united Ukraine and for the removal of Russian forces and weapons



Ukrainian miners at Durham Miners' Gala

from Eastern Ukraine as a necessary condition for building a successful peace. We support the Ukrainian miners' and trade union movement as a movement that unites Ukrainian workers across the whole of Ukraine”.

The April Ukrainian miners' congress demanded: return state support to the mining sector, fix a reasonable coal price equivalent to the price at which coal is imported.

The Kyiv government's energy minister addressed the congress, but miners angry about wage arrears heckled him and called on him to resign.

• ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/

Left calls on Syriza to defy ECB and IMF

By Martin Thomas

According to Stathis Kouvelakis, a left-wing member of Syriza's central committee, writing on 3 May: “The latest from the negotiations between Greece and the Eurogroup in Brussels is that breakdown seems quite close.

“The IMF is in the front-line, asking for further deregulation of the labour market and opposing the government's plan to reestablish collective bargaining. According to the usually well-informed right-wing paper *Kathimerini* the demands of the IMF also include further cuts in pensions and oppose any raising of the minimum wage.”

Yet the Syriza-led government is rapidly approaching the point where, if it does not make a new deal with the eurozone finance ministers, it will fail to make payments falling due on Greece's debt,

The indications are that the government will capitulate and do a deal which brings a new round of cuts to Greece. But sizeable forces in Syriza oppose capitulation.

John Milios, chief economic adviser to Syriza and until recently aligned with Syriza's majority rather than the left-wing minority, has written on his blog:

“Austerity is primarily a class policy: promotes constantly the interests of capital over those of workers, professionals, pensioners and other vulnerable groups. In the long run it aims to create a working model with fewer rights and less social protection, low and flexible wages and the absence of any substantial bargaining power for wage-workers.

“It is not even imaginable for a government that stands on the side of labour and the social majority to retreat in face of blackmail demanding continued austerity...”

“The neoliberal trap can

be broken when the Greek government makes it clear that, if forced to it, will choose to delay payments in order not to breach its mandate from the people...

“Delaying payments does not involve leaving the eurozone.” Milios cites ratings agencies which say that they would not cut Greece's credit rating to “in default” if it misses a payment to the International Monetary Fund or European Central Bank.

Milios argues that the government's priority should be “the ‘home front’, the struggle for social justice and democracy, against the interests of the oligarchy that imposed the Memorandum policies”.

It should develop a “reverse redistribution”, which means social justice policies, transferring the burden to the ‘haves’, a ‘Memorandum for big business’ that will bring financial resources for the implementation of our program”.

Unite: take on the Scottish Nationalists!

Scotland
By Ann Field



"I didn't come to Scotland to criticise the SNP," said Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey at a recent public meeting in Saltcoats, organised by North Ayrshire and Arran Labour Party as part of its campaign to retain the seat for Katy Clark.

McCluskey was as good as his word. He called for a vote for Labour and a Labour government. He called for, if need be, a minority Labour government rather than one which entered pacts or a coalition with other parties. But he was not prepared to attack the SNP.

Unite's Scottish edition of the *Unite Works* general election broadsheet is equally uncritical of the SNP.

The only criticism of the frauds and charlatans of the SNP in the broadsheet consists of eleven words contained in a statement from a Labour candidate: "The SNP would leave Scotland with a £4 billion shortfall in public services."

But Len McCluskey is not alone. A fortnight before McCluskey's meeting Owen Jones spoke at another election meeting organised by North Ayrshire and Arran Labour Party. Even though Jones is of Scottish descent — as he explained at some length in an introductory genealogical treatise — he too felt it "inappropriate" to make any comment about Scottish politics. Because, you see, he lives in London.

Where does this kind of nonsense end? Should an indigenous Scot exercise political self-censorship when in England? And how about the Welsh? Should they too keep quiet when in Scotland? Or, as inhabitants of the Celtic fringe, are they allowed to have a pop at the SNP?

This is all the more amazing in that it is at odds with Unite's own Political Strategy and its stated goal in this general election which commits the union to "growing Unite membership in the Labour Party", ending discrimination against working-class candidates by "securing the adoption of trade union candidates by Labour", and "mobilising our members to vote, and then to vote Labour." It also commits Unite to "do everything in our power to organise [for the]

victory for a transformed Labour Party (in the general election)."

For reasons so obvious that they do not need to be spelt out, in Scotland such goals require challenging the SNP, and forcefully so. And it's not as if that's a difficult thing to do.

The SNP government in Holyrood spends a lower proportion of its budget on health than even the Lib-Dem coalition. Its attacks on Further Education mean that working-class youth in Scotland are less likely to attend university than their counterparts in England. Its council-tax freeze has proved to be a massive tax cut for the rich.

The SNP has opposed re-regulation of bus services, continued with privatisation of the railways, and privatised half of Scotland's ferry services. In power in Holyrood, where its MSPs have crossed PCS picket lines, it has not implemented a single redistributive policy.

In the referendum campaign it promised a cut in corporation tax for big business and no tax rises for the rich (all financed by infinite amounts of North Sea oil at a price of \$113 a barrel). And in this general election campaign its fiscal policies amount to more austerity over a longer period of time.

BLAIR

When Blair carried out similar right-wing policies, Unite (or its predecessors) was rightly critical of him. When Jim Murphy, a consistent Blairite, stood for election as Scottish Labour Party leader, Unite rightly backed his opponent. When Miliband and Balls propose "austerity-lite", Unite is rightly critical of them.

And all of those criticisms by Unite in general and by Len McCluskey in particular were public criticisms.

Surely it's not too much to expect Unite's General Secretary — in the run-up to what Unite itself describes as the "the most important general election in a generation" — to show the same willingness to publicly attack and expose the SNP's right-wing charlatanism?

At the Campaign for Socialism AGM last February Neil Findlay MSP, backed by Unite in last year's Scottish leadership contest, pointed out that the goal of the SNP is to destroy Labour in Scotland.

Not because the Murdoch-backed SNP does not find

Labour left-wing enough, or because of Miliband's disgraceful role in Falkirk. But because it needs to destroy Labour in order to implement its sole goal in life: its nationalist project of independence.

McCluskey's failure to criticise the SNP and to campaign to persuade Unite members thinking of voting SNP to vote Labour instead gives the SNP free rein to carry out its own agenda of attacking the very principle of working-class political representation.

And the rise in support for the SNP is also a threat to bread-and-butter trade unionism.

Politics in parts of Scotland are already beginning to resemble Northern Ireland, where voting based on national identities and conflicting attitudes to a border squeezes out voting based on class identities and conflicting attitudes to ideologies of left and right.

But wherever the working class is divided and weakened by questions of national identity and a border, then trade unionism is divided and weakened as well. As the biggest union in Scotland, Unite is the union which can least afford to allow such divisions to become entrenched.

Len McCluskey spoke at the meeting in Saltcoats to underline Unite's support for Katy Clark. But local SNPers denounced her as a "Red Tory".

Michael Connarty was given space in the Unite general election broadsheet to underline the union's support for him. But on his way into last Friday's rally in Glasgow with Ed Miliband, he was denounced by SNPers as a "Red Tory" as well.

On the streets and on the doorsteps that has been the tenor of the SNP's election campaign. Again, it's surely not too much to expect Unite's General Secretary to denounce this — especially given that "Red Tory" Katy Clark was the Unite-backed candidate for Scottish Labour Party deputy leader?

The SNP is a party concerned about a flag. Trade unions are not concerned about the flag but the people who live under it. That's the difference between separatism and solidarity, between nationalist division and workers' unity, between the politics of nation and the politics of class.

Unite should be tough on nationalism, and tough on the causes of nationalism.

Is Tower Hamlets judgement really establishment conspiracy?

The Left
By Sacha Ismail



None of the socialist organisations politically defending ousted Tower Hamlets mayor Lutfur Rahman seriously analyses the judgement made against him by election commissioner Richard Mawrey.

None mentions George Galloway previously hailing a judgement by Mawrey (against the Labour Party and in favour of Galloway's Respect) in 2007 — in a speech republished in full on the *Socialist Worker* website!

Socialists have no confidence in bourgeois judges, but the idea that Mawrey is a ruling-class assassin or bug-eyed Islamophobe is absurd.

The pro-Rahman left's main argument is that he is the victim of a racist witch-hunt. "Islamophobic" is the word used repeatedly, most notably the SWP and Counterfire (but also, for example, Socialist Resistance).

The Socialist Party argues that "a big dose of revenge by Labour... is mixed with outright racism against a Bangladeshi council leadership". Outright racism from who? In so far as this sentence makes any sense, it seems to be motivated more by the SP's absolute anti-Labourism than by analysis.

Counterfire, and others, makes a big deal of the fact Rahman is Tower Hamlet's "first Muslim mayor", as well Britain's. But he's the borough's only mayor so far! Muslims are only five per cent of the population in the UK, and elected mayors are pretty new.

Muslims do face discrimination, and of course this is reflected in who gets into political office. But my point is, does any significant constituency in the political establishment re-

ally think that a Muslim cannot be allowed to become a mayor? (By the way, none of Rahman's leftist defenders make the essential argument opposing executive mayors.)

There have been and are Muslim council leaders. Why have they not been removed from office? When Rahman was first elected, in 2010, the Labour candidate was a Muslim, Helal Uddin Abbas. Even after the Tower Hamlets First split, 40 per cent of Labour's remaining councillors in the borough are Muslim or from a Muslim background.

"Mainly," says the Socialist Party, "the institutions of the ruling class want to crush any hint of rebellion". The SP, Counterfire and the SWP all paint up Rahman's left-wing credentials on social provision, etc., though to be fair the SP does criticise him for making cuts. I say paint up, because there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the limited claims made for him (e.g. about EMA and building council houses) are big exaggerations, where they are not straight fabrications.

Should we believe that a significant constituency in the ruling class is so bothered by the extremely limited reforms Rahman's administration made (while also making cuts) that they were willing to organise enough pressure to fix the ruling on an election complaint?

In fact, anyone who wants Rahman gone, from whatever perspective, must be well aware of the fact that Tower Hamlets First may well win the election to replace him.

Rahman's left supporters are very bothered about the law preventing "undue spiritual influence" in elections. Counterfire claims that this law was "introduced by the British in Ireland to stop Catholic preachers rallying the Irish! One doesn't need much imagination to see how this legal relic will be used against Muslims." In fact, it was introduced by Gladstone, as he was becoming a supporter of Irish Home Rule,

and as part of a package of measures which also, for instance, outlawed bribery and checked employers' ability to coerce their workers to vote a certain way.

Despite the oppressiveness of British rule in Ireland, the law was not used to repress Irish nationalists; cases were brought by more radical and anti-sectarian nationalists against less radical and more sectarian ones (by a Parnellite against an anti-Parnellite nationalist in the Co. Meath case referred to Mawrey). The Catholic Church in Ireland was not an anti-imperialist force! It waged war against the most radical and left-wing nationalists.

And here we come to the fundamental problem with the whole approach of the left. The fact that an organisation has its base in an oppressed community does not automatically make it progressive. Counterfire (and not only Counterfire) make arguments that tend towards assuming Catholic = anti-imperialist. In the same way, they assume Muslim = anti-imperialist or in this case left-wing. CF's John Rees argues that Rahman has been prosecuted "not for what he has done wrong [making cuts], but for what he has done right". The Socialist Party also implies that all would be well with Tower Hamlets council if only it fought cuts.

There is no sense from any of these people that the growth of communal politics, and the growth of right-wing religious influence in politics, in Tower Hamlets is a big problem.

Socialist Worker denounces the "racist myth of Muslims as passive zombies manipulated by their leaders". The idea that all Muslims are always political zombies, or anything like that, is indeed racist. But SW's clear implication is that it's racist to suggest that Islamic religious and religious-political organisations ever manipulate people for reactionary ends.

Five years too many!

The writers of the Bible talk of seven years of plenty, followed by seven of famine; those of the Quran, of those 14 years and a 15th of plenty.

For both books it is the story of a fate which people can only endure, not change.

The five lean years since 2010 were made not by an unalterable god, but by the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, serving the super-rich for whom those have been five fat years. The wealth of the 1000 richest households has more than doubled since 2009.

The lean and the fat were made by human action. Human action will decide whether the next five are hungry again for the working class and the worst-off, and fat again for the rich, or good for us and austere for the rich.

We have powers to produce plenty, developed by generations of human ingenuity since the days of the Bible and the Quran, when starvation in dry years was immovable fate. Who will control those powers?

At present the rich, the top one per cent, control those powers. Even before working-class action overthrows their control, it can inflect and limit it.

We can do that only through action. Each individual who shrugs, or finds it too stressful to combat the power of the rich, undermines us. Each new individual who joins us in the battle for socialism strengthens those already active.

This issue of *Solidarity* is written before we know the election result on 7 May. We know that the idea that hungry years are immovable fate, that speaking out is too hard, that it's best to fend for oneself, has regained all too much grip.

It has hobbled resistance, and so narrowed the poll to a choice between Labour leaders who pride themselves on showing that they are "responsible" by promising more hunger, and Tories who openly glory in the aim of effectively banning all large public sector strikes.

Even that narrow choice is important, and even in that narrow choice we are not passive. We are part of the labour movement, and we work with the labour movement to return a Labour government at the same time as we fight for the labour movement to demand Labour taxes the rich and repeals cuts.

Either result on 7 May calls for renewed effort against fatalism.

If Labour wins, we work to turn the vague hopes held by



The Tories will gleefully ban large public sector strikes

millions that a Labour government will somehow end the lean years into active mobilisation for precise policies: repeal the cuts, legislate a living wage for all, tax the rich, expropriate the banks, open the borders.

If the Tories win, we argue that the conclusion that sitting out Tory rule and hoping better comes round in a cycle like the Bible's or the Quran's has been proved hopeless. Unless we fight, it is one cycle of five lean years after another, with no copious years between.

Even Tories in office, flush with election victory, can be defeated. They represent only a small minority, alienated by the passive submission of a section of the majority. Those now passive and fatalistic can be stirred up, and we can win. But only if we mobilise.

This issue went to press before polling on 7 May. We will post comment on the election result at www.workersliberty.org/07may2015

Reverse disability benefit cuts!

In the run-up to the General Election, the Tories have consistently failed to answer questions on where they intend to cut the welfare budget in order to hit their target of reducing it by £12 billion in the first two years of the next Parliament.

One of the areas in which cuts are already being made is benefits for sick and disabled people. Incapacity Benefit has already been replaced with Employment and Support Allowance – an even tougher regime than IB for those unable to work because of a health condition with testing administered by private sector providers – and now in much the same way Disability Living Allowance is being replaced with Personal Independence Payments or PiPs, which the Government predicts will produce savings of twenty per cent by 2015-16.

One theme the Tories have been promoting since its launch in a speech by the Chancellor George Osborne to the Conservative party conference in 2012 is that of "workers versus shirkers", attempting to set so-called "strivers" against those supposedly happy to live on benefits. As well as being an electoral pitch to low-paid and middle-income earners, this aims to obscure their ideologically driven push towards a radically smaller state. It also ignores the fact that DLA, as with other benefits being cut or abolished such as Child Benefit, Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credit, is largely claimed by those in work to meet living costs not covered by their wages.

Some of the effects of the Tory drive to cut disability benefits can already be seen: as well as removing the care component of the benefit from those claiming DLA, people deemed ineligible to receive PiPs also lose the mobility ele-



ment which in many cases funded the leasing of cars under the Motability scheme (Motability, founded and led by former P&O chairman and now Conservative peer Lord Sterling, has been muted in its response to this attack on the scheme's members).

Although Labour in opposition has criticised the implementation of PiP, it has so far failed to commit to abolish it and return to DLA, a non-contributory, non-means-tested benefit which helped millions of disabled people to lead more independent and fuller lives. It should do so now and end the disgraceful kicking of some of society's poorest which the Tories seem to delight in.

Help us raise £15,000

This May Day Workers' Liberty members celebrated with our comrades in the Iranian Revolutionary Marxist Tendency and the Worker-communist parties of Iraq and Kurdistan.

We also received May Day messages from comrades in Marxist Tutum from Turkey and Lalit from Mauritius. We have also recently published the third issue of our international discussion journal, *Marxist Revival*, with contributions from comrades from the UK, Iran, and France.

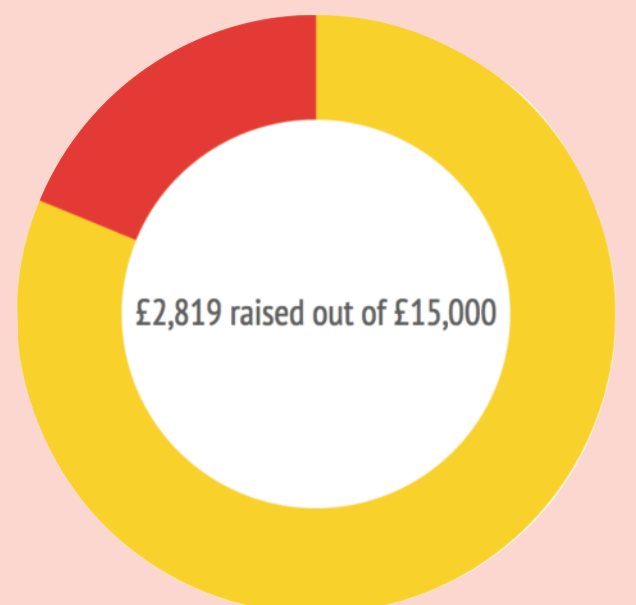
We think international discussion and solidarity is important. To do this work we need people working in our office on our international work, to be able to fund visits to other countries and for speakers to come to the UK — such as Bob Carnegie, a comrade from Australia who will be speaking in the UK later this month.

To do this we need funds. We rely on contributions from workers and students like you! So please consider:

- Getting a subscription to our weekly newspaper, *Solidarity* — workersliberty.org/subscribe
- Taking out a monthly standing order.
- Making a one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event in your local area
- Committing to do a sponsored activity and asking others to sponsor you
- Buying some of our books, posters, autocollants or pamphlets

For information on standing orders or how to donate visit workersliberty.org/donate For more ideas and information on fundraising visit workersliberty.org/fundraising

Thanks this week to Peter, Hannah, Ed and to those who donated to a collection in South London. So far we have raised £2819.



AWL celebrates May Day

AWL



The week of May Day 2015 (27 April-3 May) was busy for Workers' Liberty in London.

South London AWL was involved in organising three events — a film showing about migrants and health services in Greece as part of the Save Lewisham Hospital (SLH) campaign, a debate on the left and the general election and another film showing, of 'Still the Enemy Within'.

On Monday night we also held the second meeting of our Lise Vogel reading group on Marxism and women's oppression. On Friday, comrades from across London took part in the London May Day March, and on Saturday we held a social event to celebrate May Day, organised with Iraqi and Iranian comrades.

The SLH showing of the film 'Into the Fire' attracted about 40 people. Louise Irvine, a doctor and SLH activist, spoke about lessons from a recent delegation to Athens as part of the campaign's ongoing solidarity with Greek health workers and service users, alongside Brian Heron from the Greek Solidarity Campaign. AWL members who have visited Greece contributed their political perspective to the event.

Thursday's debate on "How should the left vote in the election?", at Goldsmiths University, was attended by about 45 people. Jill Mountford, AWL, put forward the case for the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, debating Paul Callanan of the Socialist Party and TUSC and Andrea Carey of Green Left. Such debates are much rarer on the left than they should be. There should be more of them, combined with more unity in action and campaigns. We think the meeting clarified some of the differences between class-struggle socialism and the left-wing liberalism of the Green Party, as well as our differences with TUSC. We objected to TUSC not mentioning migrant rights at all in its election material.

The next day AWL members took part in 1 May trade union march, alongside comrades from the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency and the Worker-communist Parties of Kurdistan, Iraq and Iran. We took a socialist, internationalist and anti-Stalinist message — no small thing on a march where Stalinist politics are so prominent. We also participated in the Greece solidarity contingent organised by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, alongside dozens of students from places including Essex, Warwick and UAL. UAL students, fresh from their occupation struggle, really made the day, including by taking their picture with the Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network banner. We sold £50 of literature.

On Saturday, we met with comrades from the Worker-communist Parties of Iraq and Kurdistan, and the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency, for a May Day celebration. We enjoyed Kurdish food, had a drink and a dance and listened to some performance poetry by our comrade Janine Booth. Nadia Mahmood of the WCPI spoke about the oil workers' struggle in Iraq, Morad Shirin about workers in Iran, while AWL comrade Jade Baker spoke about transforming the unions and Omar Raii about the student movement.

We finished the week with our South London showing of 'Still the Enemy Within', which was attended by about 60 people — most of whom were new. Jill Mountford spoke about the lessons of the miners' strike for today, as did Mike Jackson from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, before a lively discussion.

This week we continued selling our paper and other literature, meeting people for discussions, doing educationals, organising trade union and student struggles, and doing many other things.

Fighting union bus

How bosses, spies, and union sell-outs target activists

Jim Denham reviews *Blacklisted, the secret war between big business and union activists* by Dave Smith and Phil Chamberlain (New Internationalist)

Trade unionists have known for decades that employers operated blacklists, whereby records were kept on militants and activists (and, indeed, not particularly militant or active trade unionists) in order to exclude them from employment.

The practice was especially rife in the construction industry, where simply raising a concern over health and safety could be enough to ensure that you never found work. Countless working class lives were destroyed by the blacklist. For many years a central blacklist was managed, operated and sold to major employers by an outfit called the Economic League, which in the 1970s employed around 160 staff and was receiving over £400,000 a year in subscriptions and donations.

When media exposure (notably the campaigning journalism of Paul Foot in the *Mirror*) led to the collapse of the League in 1993, its work was taken over by an organisation called the Services Group (formed by the big construction companies as it became apparent to them that the League might not survive), and then The Consulting Association (TCA), which obtained the Economic League's database, and expanded and updated it, with files on thousands of workers, including National Insurance numbers, vehicle registrations, press cuttings and comments from managers.

Again, it was construction companies who were the main (but not only) subscribers, using the organisation as a covert vetting operation to monitor job applicants. All the biggest names in construction — Carillion, Balfour Beatty, Skanska, Keir, Costain and McAlpine — made use of TCA information to exclude job applicants and to sack workers already on site.

TCA was eventually exposed and brought down in 2009 following a raid on their premises by the Information Commissioner's Office, the body that enforces the Data Protection Act. Blacklisting was not, then, in itself illegal, but breaches of the Data Protection Act were. TCA's database was confiscated and found to contain the details of 3,213 construction workers.

As a result of the raid, the subsequent publicity and dogged lobbying by the construction union, UCATT (and to a lesser degree, Unite), the Labour government finally introduced legislation (the Blacklists Regulations 2010 — an amendment to the Employment Relations Act 1999) making

it unlawful for an employer or employment agency to refuse employment, to dismiss, or to cause detriment to a worker for a reason related to a blacklist and provides for a minimum £5,000 compensation award at a tribunal.

But this was, at best, a very small step forward and contained at least one major loophole: as it is civil, not criminal, legislation, it can only be enforced by an individual bringing a claim to an Employment Tribunal; and (as the Blacklisting Support Group pointed out when the legislation was under consultation), blacklisted workers can only bring claims against the companies that refused to employ them, which will often be small sub-contractors, and not the big companies actually doing the blacklisting.

This scandal is described in meticulous detail in *Blacklisted, the secret war between big business and union activists* by Blacklisting Support Group (BSG) founding member Dave Smith and investigative journalist Phil Chamberlain. Perhaps the most fascinating revelations in the book are interviews with HR managers and bosses involved in blacklisting, several of whom claim that they obtained information from officials of UCATT and the EEPTU. It should be emphasised that both UCATT and Unite (the union that now includes what used to be the EEPTU) have cleaned up their acts and now both take a firm stand against blacklisting. However, the book describes a meeting of the Blacklist Support Group in February 2013, at which a BSG speaker, Steve Acheson, was barracked by senior members of UCATT, who accused him of making allegations of union collusion without evidence and demanded he "name names": in response, Acheson held up a handwritten note from former TCA manager Ian Kerr and said: "If you want me to name names, I will: the name that appears on this note is George Guy" (Guy is a former senior official and acting General Secretary of UCATT: the book notes that he "vigorously denies" the allegation).

This superbly-researched and very readable book was launched in March at a meeting in Parliament at which John McDonnell MP read out a statement from Peter Francis, a former undercover cop who spent four years as part of the Met's Special Demonstration Squad. Francis's statement said he infiltrated Unison, the FBU, CWU, NUT and NUS. He had previously infiltrated anti-racist organisations and the Militant Tendency.

The Economic League and The Consulting Association may be gone, but blacklisting, spying and dirty tricks against trade unionists and other activists continue — often, it would seem, by the forces of the state.

BOB CARNEGIE SPEAKER TOUR

Bob Carnegie, who has been at the heart of every major workers' struggle in Brisbane, Australia, for more than three decades, is coming to the UK in May to talk about his experiences and lessons for organising workers.

12th — Lambeth Left Unity public meeting — bit.ly/Bob-Lambeth

14th — 10am: Blacklist court case at the High Court, London.

7pm: RMT Central Line East branch meeting (Open to RMT members and friends)

15th — Bristol, with Dave Smith of Blacklist Support Group at UWE

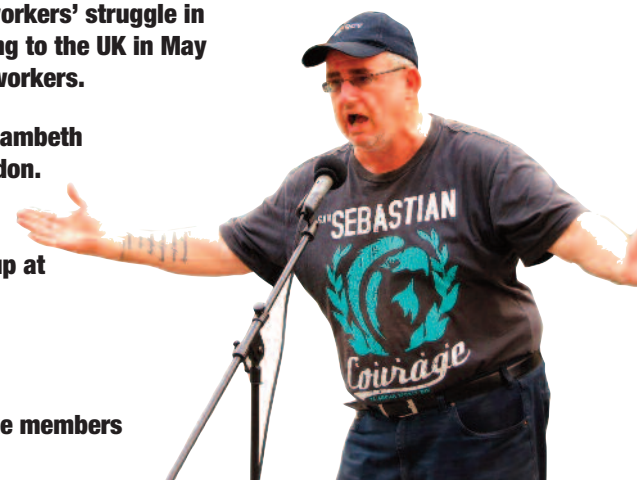
18th — Liverpool with Blacklist Support Group — bit.ly/Bob-Liverpool

19th — Southampton

20th — London Unite construction branch — open to Unite members

21st — London public meeting

For full details of venues and times see — bit.ly/Bob-speaker-tour



sting

The “no-fly” list

Bob Carnegie, an MUA [Maritime Union of Australia] activist, is speaking at meetings in the UK later this month. In this interview from 2010 Bob talks about how and why he was removed (and blacklisted) from a Chevron gas rig operating offshore from Western Australia.

Your being removed from work on the Ensco 7500 gas exploration rig, hired by Chevron and operating offshore from Western Australia, raises questions; what do you think are the most important?

The most fundamental issue is the civil-liberties issue posed by the “no-fly” policy operated by Chevron. It removes me from the rig without sacking me just by Chevron telling the companies which provide air transport to the offshore field that I am on a “no-fly” list.

The most important thing about the whole dispute is that it has flushed out that Chevron has the “no-fly” list. It was openly admitted by managers from Ensco and from OMS, the labour hire company.

Chevron is the second largest oil company in the USA, and the fifth largest in the world. Its record in the Amazon is one of the great ecological disasters of the 20th century.

The “no-fly” policy is a secret blacklist. Any worker who has an argument with a Chevron employee about anything can find themselves on the “no-fly” list — without charges, without a hearing, without an appeal, without even any formal notification. If the unions don’t fight this “no-fly” list, it will make union organisation on the job almost impossible. The unions should mount a legal challenge to it. Prima facie it is a secondary boycott.

In the British sector of the North Sea, according to *Blowout*, the journal of the Oil Industry Liaison Committee (the offshore workers’ union), employers have used similar policies, known as “NRB” (“not required back”). But *Blowout* also reports that the OILC has had some success in challenging “NRB” policies in the courts.

I don’t mind losing my job if it means the start of a real fight against the “no-fly” policy.

Aside from the “no-fly” policy, what other issues do you see as important here?

Defence of union delegates. In the main, when workers in the offshore oil and gas industry are told that they are “not required back”, the union’s way of helping is to seek to find them employment elsewhere in the industry. That means that the argument about union organisation being weakened by delegates being “not required back” is constantly being



put off.

Some would say that winning reinstatement in such circumstances is just too difficult. My view on that is that you never win every battle. But you have the battle. Through it, workers realise who the class enemy is — and in a relatively high-paid industry like oil and gas, often workers will have a blurred picture of that. And if workers see that the union is prepared to put up a fight, they’ll join the organisation, and we will develop unions which are strong enough to win reinstatement.

And safety on the rigs is an issue, too?

Yes. That is the primary reason why I have been removed from the rig — because I raised safety issues.

Safety on the rigs, in my opinion, is worse than on construction sites on the mainland. And construction sites are inherently difficult to keep safe, because they change every day. The rigs are a more stable environment, and should be easier to keep safe.

Why is safety poor? Because safety costs a fortune. There is tremendous pressure not to stop or delay any job, because the financial costs of doing that are huge compared to other industries. Unlike on a construction site or in a factory, where usually one section can be halted without losses elsewhere, the rig is a much more integrated operation, so it is more likely that stopping one job will stop everything.

Safety reps have less security than in other industries. Almost every worker on the rig is a casual of some sort. If a safety rep puts a prohibition on anything, or speaks contrary to company safety policy, they are likely to face “NRB”.

The unions should be campaigning for Australia’s offshore oil and gas industry to be raised to the safety standards of the Norwegian sector of the North Sea oilfield, or at the very least of the British sector. But the high levels of non-unionisation on the rigs will be a problem in winning that campaign, unless they can be remedied.

What are conditions on the rigs like as regards being livable for the workers?

The living conditions on the Ensco 7500 are worse than in any maximum security prison I’ve encountered in Australia. You live four to a cabin, eight to a toilet and a shower, with incessant noise, and with no recreation area.

When you’re not actually working, you can sit in the mess room, which holds about 70 people, and watch TV, or lie in your cabin, unless someone else in the cabin is trying to sleep. The vessel could not work in the Norwegian or British sectors of the North Sea because it doesn’t meet the minimum accommodation standards there.

The unions should lobby governments intensively for a regulatory framework on the north-west shelf and in the Bass Straits which lays down accommodation conditions comparable to the Norwegian sector — or at least to the British sector — of the North Sea. There should at least be some quiet space where you can read a book or have a bit of time to yourself.

The offshore oil and gas industry is a relatively new industry. It is expanding fast. Unions whose old bastions of organisation are shrinking due to industrial change need to organise in such sectors, and the MUA and AWU have put resources into organising offshore. It is an area where strong union organisation could have huge economic clout, but with difficulties not found elsewhere. Do you think some fresh thinking is needed in the union movement about organising in this sector?

The rank and file on the rig have been absolutely steadfast. When the dispute over my removal occurred on the rig, for two days, there was confusion on the vessel over the role of other workers who wanted to support the dispute.

Both the AWU and the MUA officials were deeply concerned about facing legal action for a “secondary boycott” should anyone else other than the MUA members participate in the dispute.

My concern about that is that solidarity is the soul of trade-unionism. The sanctity of the picket line, and the principle that no trade-unionist does the work of another trade-unionist on strike, are far more important than any perceived threats of the employer taking action on “secondary boycott” grounds.

I think workers will respond to aggressive, militant attempts to organise their industry by unions which are prepared to represent them and to fight beside them on all the issues — not just pay, but also safety, living conditions on the rigs, and job security. Meek trade-union organising which relies on collaboration between the unions and the employer may deliver some union membership in the first instance, but is ultimately doomed.

The unions have to be prepared to push the envelope with regard to getting full access for union organisers to be able to frequent the rigs. At present an effective way to stop union organisation is for the companies to make it difficult for union organisers to get access.

If winning access means that these companies have to be placed under pressure in other areas, then that is what has to be done. Nearly all these companies are very image-conscious. Protests outside their offices in city centres would be enormously effective.



Dave Smith was arrested earlier this year for taking part in demonstrations against blacklisting and victimisation at Crossrail sites

Election silence on climate change

By Paul Vernadsky

Almost all the main parties say they think climate change is one of the greatest threats facing humanity and that something must be done about it. Yet in the election television debates climate change was largely ignored by politicians of all stripes, never mind by media hacks and commentators.

There are real differences on the issue, given edge by the run up to the Paris climate talks in December.

The Tories boast in their manifesto that theirs has been “the greenest government ever”, which would be laughable if the issue were less important. Blue and yellow have not made green over the last five years, but rather a polluted brown ex-crescence.

The Tories set up the world’s first Green Investment Bank, forgetting that it can’t borrow much money and so can’t fund substantial infrastructure projects. They take credit for signing a deal to build the first new nuclear plant in a generation, neglecting to mention the price tag they agreed with Franco-Chinese state energy firms. They claim to have trebled renewable energy generation, yet propose a local veto for onshore wind farms.

The Tories boast of bringing energy efficiency measures to over one million homes, yet their Green Deal has barely scratched the surface for insulating fuel poor housing. They say they’ve committed £1 billion for carbon capture and storage, but that money and more was pledged by the last Labour government — and the technology has not yet been developed.

The Tories say they will continue to support the UK Climate Change Act and press for a global deal, while they harbour some of the highest-profile climate sceptics and sacked almost all the civil servants dealing with adaptation. Their government included an environment minister whose denialism meant his office was dubbed the Department Evading Flood Risk Assessments. The Tories promise to “cut emissions as cost-effectively as possible”, meaning they will carry on leaving climate change to the market and permit capitalist production to trash the planet.

Of course the Tories are coveting UKIP supporters and may yet rely on a handful of UKIP MPs to form a govern-

Climate Change



ment. UKIP’s manifesto claims that the Climate Change Act “is doing untold damage. UKIP will repeal it”. They agree on opposition to wind farms and support for fracking — so climate change will not be an obstacle to a blue-purple agreement.

The Liberal Democrats appear to take climate change more seriously, yet they are on the same page ideologically. Their manifesto promised to establish a “Natural Capital Committee”, no doubt to continue the commodification and marketisation of the environment so business can profit from it. They also keep the door open for airport expansion, no doubt with bogus offsets and market traded permits.

Labour at least took some climate steps when it was in government. Miliband helped bring in the Climate Change Act and tried to negotiate a global agreement at Copenhagen.

VESTAS

However Labour also remained within the market-oriented paradigm of “market failure” and failed abysmally over the Vestas occupation, when it could have established a publicly-owned wind turbine manufacturing industry.

It toyed with giving legal rights to trade union environment reps, but declined so as not to upset business.

The Green Party’s manifesto is remarkable for how little of substance it has to say on climate change, other than some stricter targets, and for its demand to exclude trade unions from politics by way of state funded parties. And the SNP boasts about the Scottish government’s brilliant climate policies, despite having missed its emissions targets for the past three years. Neither promotes a radical alternative to market-oriented climate politics.

In short, climate change has not been an issue in the election because capitalism, the system that causes climate change and which drives humanity ever-closer to the precipice, has not been challenged successfully. Yet there are hundreds of anti-fracking groups springing up wherever fos-



Renewed activity needs renewed politics

sil fuel profiteers start drilling. On campuses and among climate campaigners there is a renewed activity and real vigour to tackle climate change all the way down.

Socialists have an enormous contribution to make to this movement. Our political economy addresses the social causes of climate change and the impacts on working class people. Classes and class struggle tie together structure and agency in social relations and in politics. Most significantly our analysis places workers at the centre of any renewed climate movement. Our understanding of the nature of capitalist states and of international relations means we have a clear idea of who the main enemies are and where important allies can be found.

Socialist politics means we know how to formulate demands, build united fronts and take on the powers that be. Our tradition of workers’ self-activity is crucial to stopping further climate damage and to establish new socialist relations of production that will ensure a sustainable future.

Our experience of campaigning from green bans to the Vestas occupation means we bring valuable strategy and tactics that can turn the tide.

Green Party says “consume less”, not “nationalise energy”

By Todd Hamer

The Greens’ proposals on energy involve phasing out fossil fuel and nuclear power and promoting renewables through a number of changes to the subsidy and tax regime. There is no opposition to private ownership of energy production.

It is odd given their opposition to privatisation of the NHS and railways. If they ever won political power, then the plan is for their government to act as green consumer par excellence, creating incentives to persuade private industry to go green while preaching frugality to the masses.

Given the amount of air time the Green Party had during the election period, it was surprising how little they mentioned imminent ecological catastrophe.

The Green’s overriding environmental theme was a crude over-consumption theory. Green Party leader Natalie Bennett repeatedly said the earth is finite, therefore there need to be limits to economic growth. She told us that if everyone on the planet consumed at the rate of the average Brit, we would need three planets to sustain us. This is a striking image, but a moment’s thought reveals it is nonsense. Worse, it’s a political dead-end.

As far as I can tell, the evidence for this multiple planets theory comes from the World Wildlife Fund, who calculate the size of the our “Ecological Footprint” multiply it by the world population and then guilt trip us about being greedy: “The Ecological Footprint measures the amount of biologically productive land and water area required to produce the resources an individual, population, or activity consumes and to absorb the waste they generate, given prevailing technology and resource management.”

The first major flaw of this approach is that the productivity of a piece of land or sea is not fixed. For example, if the

seas of the world were fished in a sustainable way (rather than with mega-trawlers receiving government subsidies to wreck marine ecosystems) then the seas would be vastly more productive in terms of the number and diversity of fish and as a carbon sink.

Developments in agriculture may increase crop yields (as they have ever since Marx and Malthus were having this same debate 200 years ago). In the small print WWF admits that the footprint is a snapshot of current resource consumption based on current technology. However, the Green Party use the footprint approach to paint a picture of greedy humanity gobbling up the planet.

The second flaw is the misleading claim that the world’s resources are “finite”. Even under capitalism there are extensive recycling infrastructures, and a planned economy would build upon this.

TRANSITION

A few key resources cannot be recycled, or cannot be recycled in a useful timeframe. The most significant genuinely finite resource are fossil fuels, the energy source of almost all production and transportation for the last 200 years.

The WWF’s calculations include a piece of woodland that would offset the carbon emissions. But nobody seriously suggests individually-sponsored tree planting is a solution to climate change.

The solution to the current ecological crisis is a rapid transition to renewable, and as a stopgap, nuclear, energy sources that can sustain current standards of living for the majority during a period of probable ecological flux.

A Green Party that held state power would be in a position to do this, yet they are reluctant to challenge private ownership of the energy companies.

The Green’s respect for private property may lie behind the third flaw in their multiple worlds theory which obliterates class inequalities by focussing on the consumption of “the average citizen”. The richest one per cent in the USA — three million people — consume 70 times as much as the entire income (consumer spending, public services, investment) of 92 million people in Somalia and Ethiopia.

This section of society are also the most violent opponents of socialising the means of production so that we can make the planned transition from fossil fuel based energy to renewables. They insist that energy infrastructure, transport, factories and even the minds of inventors and scientists, should be their own private property to manipulate for their own self-enrichment.

The problem is not the volume of things consumed but the fact that almost all production involves burning fossil fuels. There is very little that individual consumers can do to influence the way capitalists organise production. But a government wielding state power can take control of production and kick the bosses out.

Marx once said “Life begins [when work ends] at the table, the tavern, in bed.” The Greens’ would add “at the shops”. The fact that the Green party has not had the imagination to propose an intervention into the workplace and use state power to disrupt the capitalists’ destruction of the planet, shows a lack of understanding about how capitalism works.

We know that the waste created by the fossil fuel energy has created a layer of greenhouse gas that is heating up the planet. This will result in extreme weather that could render useless much of the infrastructure that is necessary to sustain human life as we know it.

If the Greens offer no alternative to this future, then they are an obstacle to building the working-class-led transition we need.

Britain's New Corruption

Pat Yarker reviews *How Corrupt Is Britain?* Edited by David Whyte (Pluto Press: 2015).

"Old Corruption has passed away, but a new, and entirely different, predatory complex occupies the State... with its interpenetration of private industry and the State... its control over major media of communication, its blackmail by the City, its reduction of the public sector to subordinate roles, and its capacity to dictate the conditions within which a Labour Government must operate..."

E P Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English", 1965.

Have we, as David Whyte asserts at the outset, "historically construed corruption as something that is exclusively a problem in developing or economically 'primitive' societies, rather than our own"? I don't think so.

E P Thomson's warning sounded fifty years ago in a reflection on the home-grown political corruption of an even earlier age. The corruption engendered in Britain by the relationship between corporate bodies and state institutions, the chief focus of Whyte's book, has been explored regularly since then in fiction, film and on TV not because we think it never happens here but because we know it does.

So Whyte sets off with a wobble. But he soon finds his stride, arguing a case for corruption to be understood in broader terms than commonly. Fourteen short and highly-accessible essays follow, written in the main by academics. These consider corruption in relation to four broad areas: the effect of neoliberal policies; policing; the workings of government and public institutions; and elements of the corporate and financial sectors.

The World Bank defines corruption as "the abuse of public office for private gain". A prominent counter-corruption organisation, Transparency International, offers "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". But for Whyte, "[c]orruption is always related to the way that dominant notions of the 'public interest' are constructed and then put into practice in policy and politics."

Whyte argues for re-framing corruption as "the distortion of the public realm by private interest", or as David Beetham has it in a later essay, "the distortion and subversion of the public realm in the service of private interest". This shifts attention from an individual's moral choices to the political conditions which encourage or normalise within institutions actions properly seen as corrupt.

For Whyte, the prevailing political and economic conditions are shaped by neoliberal ideas, and in particular by what a later contributor calls a "project which demands that the role of the state must be reduced to policies that encourage the market...". This project's realisation has created "a



Legalised secrecy associated with City of London's offshore financial markets is bound to lead to fraud and corruption

new opportunity structure for institutional corruption".

In contemporary Britain, Whyte argues, private, corporate, interest increasingly infiltrates and shapes political practice, and subsumes public interest. For neoliberals, corruption is a problem not of weak government but of markets rendered imperfect by regulation. Were the economy fully deregulated, and hence made fully competitive, these people believe no corruption could occur. Alternatively, corruption can be made to vanish by recasting private interest as entirely consonant with the public interest.

For most of the contributors, such a cure is just another name for the disease. When neoliberal ideas and practices colonise the public sector, re-configuring it in market terms, what results is not less but greater scope for corruption. "Contemporary understandings of corruption must therefore start with an understanding of what has changed in the relationship between the 'public' and the 'private'." This requires renewed thinking about the relationship between corporate power and state power, particularly in strong states.

THATCHER

For Whyte, the contemporary iteration of the institutional corruption that involves state power (rather than the petty corruption engaged in for individual self-advancement or enrichment) stems from the Thatcherite era.

Anti-statist rhetoric, and the prolonged assault on institutions (most notably, trade unions) capable of defending the public interest as formerly conceived, are important here. But most significant has been the policy of privatisation.

Privatisation breached the space of the public sector to enable and legitimise the siphoning into private pockets of public monies on a vast scale. At the same time, the values and

ethos of the corporate sphere began to drive out a contrary set which had informed the workings of the public sector. Individualism, self-aggrandisement and the ungainsayability of the bottom line attempt to render obsolete or pointless a sense of public service, selfless duty to others, and collective solidarity.

What the public interest is, who decides it and how, are foundational issues for a democracy. The merging of public or collective interest with private interest, or rather the fading-out of a discrete public interest, threatens democracy by curtailing what can be spoken about in ways that gain a hearing, and by redoubling already-powerful voices. Furthermore, the merger serves, according to David Beetham, "to undermine the capacity and integrity of government itself. The hollowing out of government at central and local levels that results from so much outsourcing deprives government of the skills, experience and personnel that flow from providing services directly, and gives the private sector a key advantage when negotiating contracts."

Other harms accrue. They include: the attempt to valorise each of us primarily as consumers and as "entrepreneurs of the self"; the vast losses incurred by the public purse now and in the future from such policies as PFI/PPP; and the increasing and morale-sapping sense that the corrupt keep getting away with it.

Powerful people wield corporate might in familiar ways to mould public debate about policy and the formulation of "the public interest". They do it through large donations to governing parties, through preferential access to ministers, through funding of politicians' private offices, through lobbying and the capture of regulatory bodies. Whyte concludes with a recognition of the class dimension in play: "The function of the political economy of institutional corruption in Britain today [is] to extend and embed the class power of elites."

Phil Scrutton races through a socialist history of the police, exploding the notion of "policing by consent" and highlighting how and why the police have always been used to repress working-class communities. Other contributors review the Hillsborough cover-up, the killing of Mark Duggan, the pattern of responses by the BBC to the sexual abuse allegations made against Savile and Stuart Hall, the "revolving door" process by which senior figures move between government and boardroom, and the contested ruling in 1978 by the European Court of Human Rights that the British government was not guilty of torturing 14 IRA suspects.

An essay in the final section presents a clear and concise account of how Britain's tax-havens and "secrecy jurisdictions" operate. The City of London controls about a quarter of the global market for offshore financial services. The legalised secrecy associated with this market enhances the likelihood of fraud and cloaks all manner of corrupt practices. Other essays in this last section look at the scandal of stratospheric boardroom pay, the involvement of the Big Four accountancy firms in corrupt practices, and the waves of mis-selling of financial products which have defrauded millions since the Big Bang deregulation of 1986.

One of these concluding essays argues that in the banking and financial sectors: "normal" business is now "corrupt business". The writer asks: "What can now surprise us about the corporate world? About the state? And is it not a reasonable response simply to slide into apathy, alienation and atomisation?" He implies the answer is no, but does not elaborate.

The left must do so. Against the "anaesthetising effects of the routine nature of bank crime" we must persist with the demands to open the books, strip back secrecy, regulate proactively, expose the deals done. You don't have to endorse the view that corruption is now politically institutionalised to be convinced of this. Wide layers of the public continue to respond with anger rather than indifference to revelations of sleaze, fraud and corruption. People see in such corruption their collective interest worked against and undermined, and their good faith exploited if not mocked. The central clash the left identifies within capitalism still resonates. The interests of the great majority who must sell their labour do not align with the interests of the minority who must buy it.

This book's caustic, detailed and eye-opening analysis of the structural dimensions of Britain's New Corruption brings home once more the truth of the old hunch: something is rotten in the state.

IMAGINING THE FUTURE

2-5 JULY 2015, BIRKBECK COLLEGE, LONDON

A festival of socialist ideas and leftwing discussion, Ideas for Freedom, organised by Workers' Liberty, is an opportunity to explore, through talks, film showings, workshops and debates, ideas about how our world works, and how we can fight for a better one. This year, the theme of the event will be visions of a socialist, egalitarian, democratic future and strategies to fight for it.

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY NIGHT
WALKING TOUR
FRIDAY NIGHT
'CLASS STRUGGLE OR LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR' - SOCIALISTS DEBATE THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER
SATURDAY
DAY OF DEBATE, FILM SHOWINGS AND TALKS
EVENING SOCIAL - FUNDRAISER FOR RAINBOW INTERNATIONAL
SUNDAY
DAY OF DEBATE, FILM SHOWINGS AND TALKS

SESSIONS INCLUDE:

TECHNOLOGY - THE END OF WORK?
Aaron Bastani, Nick Srnicek and Bruce Robinson

CLIMATE CHANGE: FUTURE OF ENERGY
Dave Elliott, author and engineer involved in the Lucas Plan

SECULARISM, FEMINISM & SOCIALISM
Marieme Helie Lucas, Algerian socialist and author

THOMAS MORE'S UTOPIA
Cath Fletcher, Workers' Liberty and expert advisor on the BBC's Wolf Hall

IF WORKERS RAN THE RAILWAYS
With transport workers from London and Toronto

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Tickets bought before 1 May
£30 waged, £15 low-waged/student, £6 unwaged

Tickets bought before 13 June
£33 waged, £17 low-waged/student, £6 unwaged

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1945: the war ends in Europe

When World War Two ended in Europe, 70 years ago on 8 May 1945, the USA came out of it with an industrial and economic dominance such as no power had ever had before.

The US bourgeoisie and its allies also faced a surge of working-class radicalism and national liberation struggles which would include, in 1946-7 in the USA, a larger strike wave than any known before.

In the end, the US-dominated world found enough elasticity, and enough fear of repetition of what had happened around the end of World War One, to respond by conceding parliamentary democracies, welfare states, and national independence in Western Europe, and bit-by-bit independence to colonies.

That did not happen automatically, uniformly, or smoothly. In Eastern Europe, it was only after the mid-1950s that Moscow domination became more flexible, and even then within narrow limits shown by the military crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia's reforms in 1968.

The revolutionary socialists of 1945 sought to mobilise and inspire the working class struggles, so that they could win a new society, not just patchy reforms, fated to fade when the capitalist classes launched a counter-offensive as they did with neo-liberalism from the late 1970s. This 14 May 1945 article by Albert Glotzer for *Labor Action*, the paper of the "heterodox" Trotskyists in the USA, shows how.

The revolutionary socialists were not able in time to transform the labour movements to throw off entrenched Stalinist and social democratic domination; and after about 1948 they became marginalised for decades. The outcome of future crises and times of flux will depend on what we, the revolutionary socialists of today, do now to prepare for them.

The war against Germany and Italy in Europe, and Japan in the Far East, was a conflict between rival powers. The Axis nations sought to change the world in their own favour.

By that they understood the necessity of wresting from the United Nations the economic power lodged in Great Britain, France and the United States. In simple words, what Germany, Italy and Japan sought were the colonies, markets, raw and materials of the Allies.

In order to win the support of their peoples to a war of expansion, i.e. imperialism, they spoke about freedom, the right to live, and "lebensraum". They spoke of the need to defend culture, the living standards of their people, and civilisation.

But they lied, like all rulers need to when they drag their peoples into war.

In defense of their own centuries-old, ill-gotten gains, the Allied rulers pretended that the war to defend their colonies and riches was a war for the four freedoms and the Atlantic Charter, a war against fascism, totalitarianism, militarism and the inhumanity of man towards man.

Yet even before the war ended in Europe, but at a time when the military fortunes of the Allies had changed to the point where victory was a certainty, the "noble ideas" announced by Roosevelt and Churchill, for which the people must give their lives, were completely forgotten.

Hitler had enslaved almost all of Europe on his road to the conquest of the world. He destroyed the independence of nations and enslaved their subject to their brutal rule. During



1946 Philadelphia transit strike, part of a wave of post-war strikes in the US involving millions of workers

the early years of the war, German fascism seemed all-powerful, incapable of destruction. But its immense power could not prevent the emergence of a new force on the Continent, the mighty movements in all countries fighting for their liberation from all tyrants, fighting for their national independence, fighting for free speech, free assembly, free press and free organisation, and their right to choose their own governments.

The victory of the Allies in Europe, however, did not bring these things to the people. In one country after another the same struggle goes on now against the "liberators".

Poland, the country over whose independence the war began, is now a Russian puppet state enslaved in the same way as it was under German rule. Its people live under the terror regime of the GPU [secret police] and its Lublin offspring. Finland is completely under the domination of Russia. The Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania have been incorporated into the Russian nation and the other United Nations have acquiesced in Stalin's grab. All of Eastern Europe and the Balkans are under Russian influence.

Italy, after more than a year and a half of "liberation", has still not achieved its national independence, nor the important freedoms promised it in the early days of the war. Belgium remains under the supervision of Great Britain. Greece is crushed under the jagged heel of British imperialism.

So far as the colonial world is concerned, Great Britain has already announced that it will brook no interference with her empire. Stalin's interest in Asia has already been made abundantly clear in his intervention in Iran and in remarks subtly made about Russian interests in China and an outlet to the Indian Ocean.

In all of these conflicts, the United States pursues its own aims of preventing any single power from dominating Europe, while seeking to establish its economic weight over the entire world.

The war in Europe did establish the fact more clearly that behind the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy stood their respective industrial and financial ruling classes. These regimes were agents of capital, fighting a war to advance the economic interests of these capitalist classes.

Despite the economic power of a revived German imperialism, the fascist movement, made up of the scum of society,

revealed itself to be composed of cowardly mercenaries who disintegrated when defeat became inevitable. Its collapse also revealed that the leaders were in truth merely the servants of their capitalist masters.

But German fascism had accomplished its task at home only too well. In the years preceding the war and especially during the war they succeeded in so effectively destroying the German labor movement that military collapse did not bring about a widespread national movement of revolt, such as had occurred in Italy with a weaker fascist regime. The same German masses which had suffered ten years of Nazi enslavement, now face a new enslavement under the Allied victors.

The defeat of the fascist powers, moreover, does not end the danger of fascism in the world. Fascism has been revealed as the agent of imperialism, as the servant of the capitalist rulers. So long as capitalism continues to exist, so long as imperialism is triumphant, the danger of fascism remains a constant threat to the world.

The most important fact to be borne in mind now is that the hope of the peoples for permanent peace is in vain so long as the present social order continues. The deliberations at the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations aimed at the establishment of a new world organisation to maintain the peace already demonstrate that the new world struggle for power referred to above is inescapable.

SOCIALIST

The struggle for peace is the struggle of the peoples for a new life, for a new social system, for a socialist world of peace, freedom, and plenty for all.

The consequences of the European peace for America are already obvious in the widespread cutbacks and cancellation of war contracts. This means the growth of unemployment for millions of American workers.

The war economy which was carried through on the backs of American labor will now be sharply curtailed. But the workers who have toiled throughout the war years to break all records in production and productivity under frozen wages, a no-strike pledge and a deterioration of their working conditions and standard of living, face the coming period with the threat of unemployment under conditions where they will be unable to meet it.

The government in Washington which has so faithfully served the interests of American monopoly capitalism, guaranteed its profits and enriched it beyond all expectations, has seen to it that industry will be well rewarded for its "contributions" to the war by refunds running into hundreds of millions of dollars. This will swell even more the already swollen profits of America's economic rulers. Yet nothing has been done by this same government for labor to help it meet the post-war situation such as has been created by the end of the war in Europe.

The present situation dictates to labour to organise its independent forces in a struggle for its rights. It means a fight to place the burdens of reconversion upon the shoulders of industry which can more than afford it and take it off the overburdened shoulders of labour.

This is only part of the program for labour. To carry on this fight labour must organise itself now, not on the economic field, but on the political as well, by building a party of its own to fight for this programme.

Labor Action, 14 May 1945 (abridged)

Hating Tories and other poems

Rosalind Robson reviews *Mostly Hating Tories*, poems by Janine Booth

Many of Janine's poems are, as she says, all about "venting her spleen on the poetic stage". For this Workers' Liberty member, socialist-feminist, trade unionist, spoken-word performer, every day has to be a day for hating the Tories.

Here are the worst excesses, vanities and unthinking elitism of Tory politicians, vilified and poked fun at:

"Shall I compare thee to a winter's day?
Thou art more cold and more intemperate..."

Here too, thoughts about terrible injustices which might otherwise be one day's headline in a local newspaper, shared on Facebook, then forgotten. A poem about Daniel Gauntlett, a homeless man who died of hypothermia, on the doorstep of an empty home:

"Boards on windows and lock on doorstep
Standing between him
And the meagre shelter that could have saved him."

This collection reflects all of Janine's interests, pet hates, and life as a socialist activist and trade unionist: from health and safety at work, to solidarity with Iranian trade unionists, the gentrification of Hackney, being autistic, and the essence

of domestic dogs. Most are stories, and they are told with wry humour or biting sarcasm, as appropriate. But Janine is most successful, for me, where she brings to light more detailed aspects of our unequal world. This one about the night bus from Hackney to central London:

"At 5a.m., a half-full cart to take
The staff who clean and guard before you wake
Who start the engines 'fore the rest of us
From brief repose unwilling exodus
Hold open half-mast eyes on work-worn faces..."

• *Mostly Hating Tories* can be purchased (£3) from www.janinebooth.com/shop

We need school worker unity!

By an NUT member

At this year's NUT conference the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC) used its bulletin to open a discussion about whether we should be in favour of a single teachers' union.

It is excellent that debate was carried in the bulletin. It is exactly the sort of discussion we need within LANAC as we fight to strengthen and build the organisation. However there was a different viewpoint missing from the debate.

Workers' Liberty believes that more than a single teachers' union, although that would clearly be big a step forward, we need a single school workers' union. Many of the issues we face as teachers are faced by other workers in schools. In my school we regularly work together on union issues alongside our colleagues in the GMB and Unison. In recent months we have worked together over issues concerning back to work interviews, health and safety concerns, as well as over the pay and pensions disputes.

In reality most classroom teachers will have more in common with teaching assistants (TAs) and other school workers than they will with Senior Leadership — many of whom are organised within the NUT. In the case of TAs they are often in the same classrooms, working with the same children as we are, and with the same goals as we have. Within a single school workers' union many of the issues we would address would be the same.

Some may argue that a single school workers' union would undermine teachers' professional sta-

tus. I consider myself first and foremost a worker rather than a professional. The notion of teachers as some sort of elite professionals, who are somehow better than other education workers, runs counter to the idea of solidarity and effective trade unionism. Where the issue is a practical one concerning TAs and others taking classes instead of teachers, our approach to this shouldn't be "you can't do that. You are not a professional teacher". Rather "if management are going to ask you to teach a class, they should get you proper training and a teacher's salary". Although the Tories are keen to undermine the professional status of teachers, we can best defend ourselves not by declaring ourselves special elite but by arguing for appropriate training for all those leading classes and for a levelling up of wages and conditions.

It is less than a year since we saw the potential strength of a school workers' union. When, on the 10th July 2014, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) struck alongside support staff and other school workers in Unite, Unison and the GMB we were able to close more schools than if we had struck alone. Were we to be able to organise, within one union, alongside our brothers and sisters who carry out other roles within schools, any threat of action would carry more weight. When it is necessary to strike, the chances of closing schools through our action would be far greater.

A single school workers' union would be more effective in defending teachers, other education workers, and education. We should fight to make it a reality.

Striking over outsourcing

By Gemma Short

Workers at Barnet council struck on 30 April and 1 May in a dispute over outsourcing up to 80% of jobs.

Workers in all areas of the council apart from schools joined the strike, and a 50-strong picket line was held at North London Business Park, where many council offices are housed. On 1 May, strikers joined the central London May Day march after picket lines in the morning.

If the council does not move, a second phase of strikes will follow on Thursday 21 May and Friday 22 May, and a third on Monday 1 June and Tuesday 2

June.

Libraries are one of the services to be affected by outsourcing and cuts. Activists have been holding a "grand tour of Barnet libraries" with marches between local libraries in protest. The next, and final, leg of the tour will start from South Friern Library at 11am on Saturday 9 May and march to East Finchley Library then onto Church End Library and finish at North Finchley Library.

Unite members at Bromley Council have continued their strikes against mass privatisation of services in the council.

Workers are taking part in selective strikes. Library workers were out on 27-30

April, parks on 5 May, Astley care centre and passenger services will strike on 13-19 May, and all workers (apart from school staff) struck on 1, and will strike again on 7 and 19 May.

Tory run Bromley council has £130 million in reserves, yet is privatising the bulk of its services.

The council has also attacked the Unite union, by withdrawing facility time from the branch secretary.

• Send messages of solidarity to: Barnet — john.burgess@barnetunison.org.uk Bromley — onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org



Workers organised a 50-strong picket line in Barnet

May Day solidarity for gallery strike

National Gallery workers took their 23rd strike day on May Day in their dispute over outsourcing of gallery assistant jobs.

Strikers welcomed the London May Day march into Trafalgar Square, where the gallery is, by handing out 1,000 painted sunflowers. May Day participants were asked to hold up the sunflowers to show solidarity with strikers.

Support from the art

world has been mounting, with artists including Grayson Perry signing a letter to Gallery management.

Workers are calling for increased solidarity as management continues refusing to negotiate over job losses.

• Donate to the strike fund, organise a solidarity event, pass a motion of solidarity, or sign the petition here — bit.ly/Help-Nat-Gal



NCAFC organised a Greece solidarity bloc on the London May Day march this year. Members of Workers' Liberty and Marxist Revival joined them. Picture shows Occupy UAL activists holding a banner which reads "Iranian workers are not alone".

6 week strike still strong

An indefinite all-out strike by Homeless Caseworkers in Glasgow is still going strong after 6 weeks.

The strike, which started on 31 March, is over pay grading which sees the workers paid in a different band to other workers who do a similar job. The difference between grades is up to £5,000 a year.

The strike has left the service running on just 5 workers and drafted in management.

Strikers have been getting lots of support from the community and the labour

movement, including a £340 donation from probation officers at a prison. The strikers have been picketing the prison because a council homelessness office, staffed by non-Unison workers, is housed there.

Strikers say CWU members have consistently refused to cross their picket lines, and workers at housing charity Shelter are organising solidarity collections.

• Send messages of support to: enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk

Unison puts in pay claim

The Unison reps on the NJC (the body that negotiates pay and conditions with the local government employers) have put a pay claim based on the decisions of the Unison Local Government Special Conference which took place in March.

This is a claim for 2015-

16, which would override the 2014-16 deal the union pushed through in October last year.

Reps from the other local government unions (Unite, GMB) did not support putting the pay claim.

The Unison NJC reps meet on 12 May to decide the next steps.

**Public Debate — Academy Conversion at Prendergast school, Lewisham
14 May, 7pm, Rivoli Ballroom, SE4 2BY
bit.ly/SAIL-debate**

Other industrial news

Cleaners demonstrate at Barbican —

bit.ly/1FMBFnk

May Day reports — bit.ly/1KctIwh



Baltimore: the violence of capitalism

By Gemma Short

"This city has looked like it had a riot since I was born," Baltimore resident Vashti Presco said. "It wasn't rebuilt after 1968, even though other cities had worse riots. That drugstore is probably never going to get rebuilt."

Protests in Baltimore since the killing by police of Freddie Gray have been labelled as riots in the media. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake has condemned those involved as "criminals" and "thugs". President Obama condemned the protesters' violence.

All are ignoring the many peaceful protests and erasing the brutal violence inflicted on the black community in Baltimore by a crushing combination of police brutality and grinding poverty.

As Nehisi Coates wrote in *Atlantic*: "When nonviolence is preached as an attempt to evade the repercussions of political brutality, it betrays itself. When nonviolence begins halfway through the war with the aggressor calling time out, it exposes itself as a ruse. When nonviolence is preached by the representatives of the state, while the state doles out heaps of violence to its citizens, it reveals itself to be a con."

Freddie Gray died on 19 April, from injuries sustained when he was chased, arrested and taken for a "rough ride" in a police van. He had "caught an officer's eye" and run away.

Freddie suffered a broken neck which left his spine

"80% severed" and his voicebox crushed.

Police chiefs have admitted that the police failed to provide Freddie with medical attention and did not seatbelt him in the van. He was transported with his hands tied behind his back and his legs in restraints. Many activists say police deliberately take "rough rides", driving vehicles erratically in order to injure passengers.

By the time Freddie received medical attention he was in cardiac arrest; he was in a coma before he reached the hospital and died a week later.

Soon after Freddie's death the six police officers involved in his arrest were suspended and a criminal investigation was started. On 1 May, Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby announced charges against all of the officers. This included a "second-degree depraved heart murder" charge against Officer Caesar Goodson, the driver of the police van in which Freddie suffered his fatal injuries.

PROTESTS
Protests have continued since Freddie's death, but changed character on Monday 27 April, the day of his funeral, in response to increasing police aggression and the calling in of the National Guard.

A curfew imposed by Mayor Rawlings-Blake made matters worse, and she was forced to withdraw it on Sunday 2 May.

On 27 April 75-100 school students gathered at Mondawmin Mall, a transport

hub for students travelling to and from many local schools, in response to a "social media call out" for a "purge" (a reference to a film where crime is made legal). Police responded in full riot gear, closed the local transit station so the students couldn't get home and confronted crowds with pepper spray and tasers. Inevitably students threw rocks and bottles at police in response. Reports say police threw rocks back.

Protests escalated throughout the afternoon and evening. A drugs store was "looted" and set on fire, one or two other stores were broken into and a few police cars set on fire. Property damage was, as with similar events, very limited. As Shawn Gude, who witnessed the night, wrote in *Jacobin*: "But of the entire scene, the most salient thing wasn't the destruction wrought by protestors — the cop car demolished, the payday loan store smashed up — but by capital: the decrepit, boarded-up row houses, hovels and vacants in a city full of them."

Police provocation, violence and paranoid over-the-top responses to protests have continued.

On Friday 1 May, 100 protestors gathered outside City Hall to defy the curfew, sitting down in a circle on the lawn. Within half an hour police moved the demonstration using physical force and arresting 53 people. In Sandtown-Winchester police used armoured vehicles to drive onto pavements to "disperse" crowds breaking the curfew.

On Saturday 2 May a march from Sandtown-Winchester to Baltimore's prison ended with police arresting the entire march, including one legal observer and two medics.

This violence is the everyday lived experience for the black community in Baltimore. 109 people have been killed by Maryland police in the last five years, 71 of them in Baltimore city



alone. 70% were black and 40% were unarmed. In the last four years, more than 100 people have won civil suits for police brutality.

During Rawlings-Blake's time as Mayor, the city has been forced to pay \$5.7 million to settle civil suits over police misconduct and brutality. A further \$5.8 million has been paid to defend police who have been implicated in harassment, abuse, assault or murder of a black person.

Victims include a 15-year-old boy riding a dirt bike, a 26-year-old pregnant accountant who had witnessed an assault, a 50-year-old woman selling church raffle tickets, a 65-year-old church deacon rolling a cigarette and an 87-year-old grandmother aiding her wounded grandson.

POVERTY
Baltimore is different to Ferguson, where Michael Brown was shot and killed in 2014.

It is a major urban centre, with a black majority population which is reflected in a black majority in the city's political leadership. It contrasts to severe underrepresentation of black people in Ferguson. Yet Baltimore Police Department is still overwhelmingly white.

The same issues of race-

linked poverty occur in Baltimore as in Ferguson. Black children in Baltimore are nine times more likely to die before age one than white children; white and black neighbourhoods just six miles apart have a 20-year difference in life expectancy; median income for black households in Baltimore is \$33,610 compared to \$60,550 for white households and \$73,538 for the general population in the rest of Maryland; unemployment for black men between the ages of 20-24 is 37%; and 24% of Baltimore's population lives below the poverty line.

Decades of decline in manufacturing have left large areas of the city, and large sections of the population, without jobs. The jobs that the city claims have replaced manufacturing — in cyber security, life sciences and information technology — are seeking white collar, college-educated workers, mostly found in the white population.

In a court testimony Freddie's mother said she had never learned to read, and that she had sniffed heroin

daily from the age of 23. He and his two siblings grew up in a house saturated with lead paint, and they had problems typically associated with lead exposure: ADHD, medical and behavioural issues.

Having a black political leadership in Baltimore City has not dismantled institutional racism. It definitely has not pushed back the grinding poverty that affects black communities more than white. The situation in Baltimore is less clearly one of outright racism of a white cop against poor black communities.

As described on the American Socialist Worker website (no link to UK SWP), Baltimore is run by a black political establishment that is "fully integrated into the post-civil rights landscape — a landscape that includes massive levels of segregation, intense concentrations of poverty and astounding brutality alongside a new black middle class and political class."



Strike for black lives
Dockworkers in Oakland shut down the port on May Day in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Read more — bit.ly/DockStrike