

**Immigrants suffer the  
brunt of the crisis** :: READ MORE PAGE 8 ::



**Students fight for  
free education**

:: READ MORE PAGE 5 ::

**NO  
CUTS  
IN  
EDUCATION**



# Socialist Voice

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE | INTERNATIONAL WORKERS LEAGUE - FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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## As the crisis worsens the working class will face new challenges in 2015



The working class and the youth will not be the beast of burden of the bosses while the deepening of the crisis threatens with more cuts in budget and benefits, zero-hour contracts, no pay rise and precarious work for the youth.

In the last few months strikes have been increasing in number and working days lost in the 12 months up to September 2014 is 250 per cent higher compared to the same period in 2013.

:: READ MORE PAGES 6 & 7 ::

*UCATT crane drivers strike over pay*

### Left Unity national conference



:: PAGE 9 ::

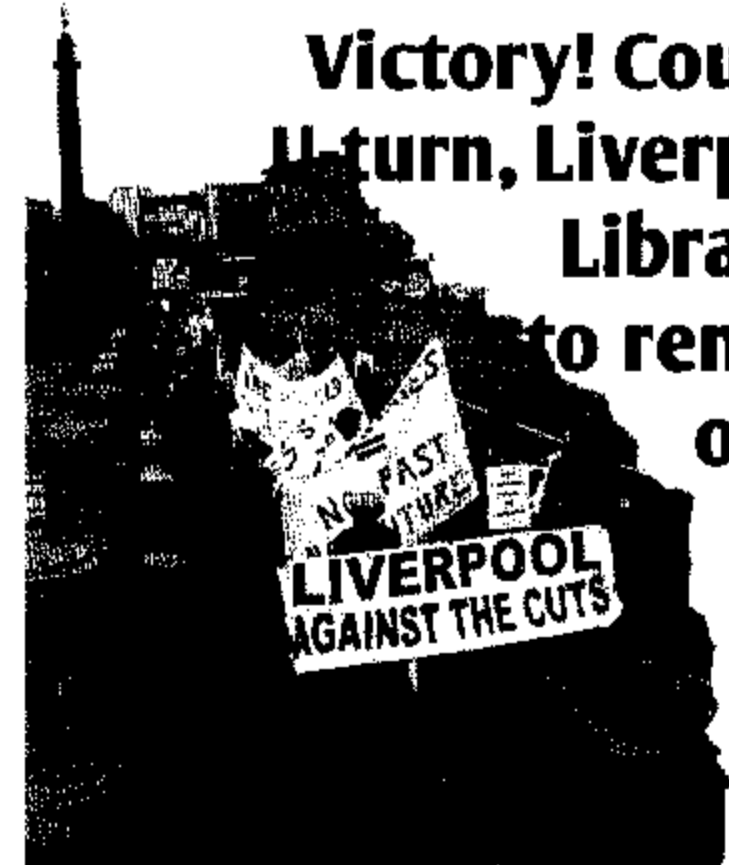
### NHS: Now for a 24 hours strike

:: PAGE 4 ::

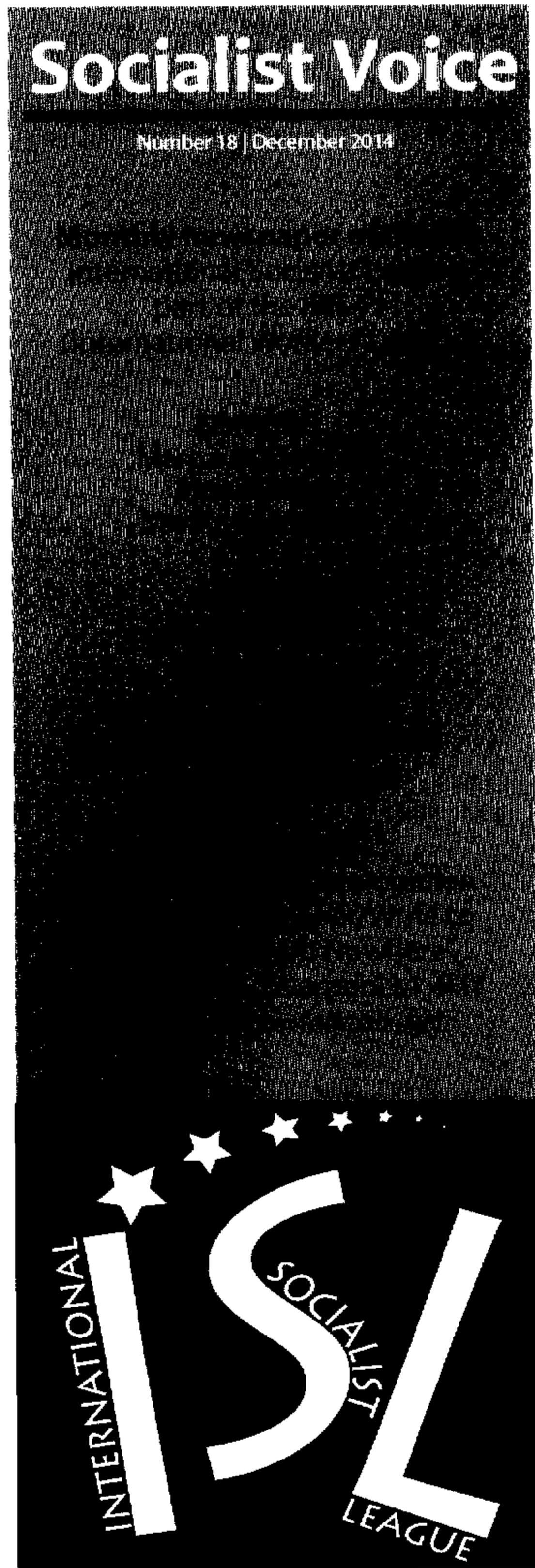
### Podemos, a closer look at the Spanish miracle

:: PAGE 10 ::

### Victory! Council U-turn, Liverpool Libraries to remain open



:: PAGE 3 ::



# LIFE OF THE IWL

## El Salvador

**Salvadoran UST obtains more than 13000 signatures to stand in elections**



Socialist Workers Unity (UST) are standing teachers Ernesto Garcia and Elba Argueta in the district elections of the San Salvador department. They exceeded the 12000 signatures legal requirement for a nomination of a candidate, with more than 13000. Now they are calling on the Superior Electoral Court to register them as Independent Socialist Candidates (CIS) for the next elections.

This victory belongs to all who shared the understanding that to get out of the painful economic situation that Salvadoran workers are experiencing, it's necessary to build a fighting alternative to the existing political parties.

"This is the first registration of independent candidates in the service of working class struggles and the popular sectors throughout the country. Our goal is to become

a spokesperson for workers struggles and the deepest needs of our working people".

The organisation also denounced the anti-democratic nature of the Salvadoran electoral system. UST claim that it allows only two parties to win, and does not have the political support of the people because it imposes unequal conditions for independent candidates, such as the denial of representatives in a polling station or access to party political fund accounts.

The UST considers that the 'crossed vote' which means one can vote for candidates from different parties, and not only candidates from the same party "is an inadequate reform, since the anti-democratic conditions are maintained and it is useless because both major parties retain control of the institutions that regulate the elections".

### 25 November: IWL mobilised for the International Day to End of Violence Against Women



*Not a minute more: end violence against women!*



"Against sexism and exploitation!" - Corriente Roja | Spain



"Women fight!" - PSTU | Argentina

# Victory, U-turn by Liverpool Labour council

## The eleven libraries threatened with closure will remain open

MARTIN RALPH, INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Joe Anderson, Liverpool's mayor, wrote in his blog on 23 October, "The reality is, by closing a number of libraries, we are simply asking that this service, like all others, take their fair share of the cuts". The message is unmistakable. The intention was to close eleven libraries.

However in the same blog Joe Anderson admits he is up against a powerful opposition, "it saddens me that so many from our own city want to condemn the decisions we are making, before trying to understand why we are having to make them."

It is clear and many people understand that Liverpool council is being transferred into a business with the hiring of G4S, the privatising of most services, the sacking of workers and the bullying of staff.

While declaring that there is no money, and cuts will have to continue for years, Joe Anderson had no problem using £10m from council reserves to buy the overvalued Cunard building, including 10 taps, at the exorbitant price of £3,500 each!

This council prefers to ignore the needs of the working class districts of the city and castigates anyone who stands up for them.

### Libraries saved

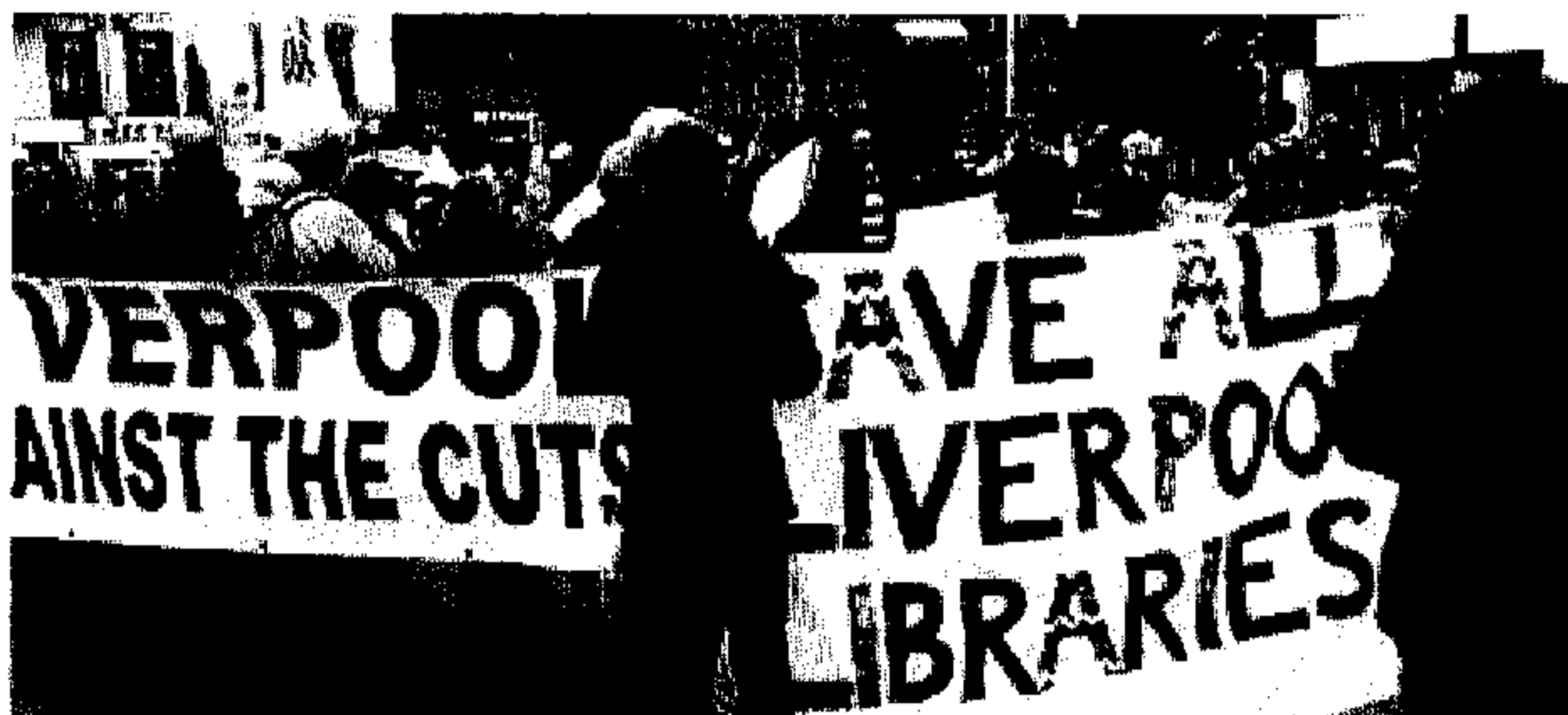
However, on 10 November, Joe Anderson, as reported on the front-page of the Liverpool Echo, claimed to have saved to have saved the libraries!

The majority of the city recognise that a wide, vibrant and well supported campaign forced the U-turn.

Two large demonstrations organised by Old Swan Against the Cuts, Liverpool Against the Cuts and the Sefton Park campaign gained support from all sections of the working class including mothers, children, students, job seekers, immigrants, the elderly, trade unionists and readers.

A petition collected 20,000 signatures, and local children's authors' Alan Gibbons and Cathy Cassidy inspired local schools and children to send a "love letter" to the council asking to asking to keep the libraries open.

Closing libraries became a dangerous policy for Labour, they feared that the



mobilisations would grow and if they did anger against all cuts and closures would affect their votes in 2015 and perhaps inspire more campaigns. Looking at what happened to social democrats in Greece, Spain and Portugal, they feared this could happen here

Strikes, the fights over libraries and other services are increasing across the country, as resistance rises in the working class.

Labour were afraid. On 8 November OSAC launched a demand for a city-wide referendum, two days later came Anderson's U-turn.

This is an important victory for the working class because Labour are one of the main pillars of the austerity programme. Their only message is vote for us and will make the cuts instead of the Con-Dems

Victory shows that if you fight and mobilise, you can win.

### Continue the struggle

However the campaign must continue. Opening hours must not be cut, and library staff must not lose jobs. We are totally opposed to running libraries with volunteers. So we call on the unions to start fighting for all jobs. They should hold meetings and agree a programme of struggle.

There are many campaigns to save libraries across the country but no union is seeking to co-ordinate and build a national campaign of mobilisation. This will have to be done by the campaigns.

What happened in Liverpool can be repeated across the country by mobilising campaigns against austerity, against all cuts and the main parties locally and nationally.

### Call a conference of struggle, choose candidates for the elections

Now it's time to take Liverpool from the grasp of those who support austerity: the Tories, Lib-Dems, Labour or UKIP, and give the city back to the workers, the poor and the youth. With this purpose OSAC will be standing in the local elections in May 2015 and call on all anti-cuts groups to do the same.

OSAC has proposed all anti-cuts groups should organise a conference to co-ordinate and deepen the fights to encourage those groups to stand in the elections on a class struggle basis.

A democratic conference should be organised so that a programme of struggle can be agreed and candidates be chosen at that conference.

We call on the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party to come to this conference of struggle, to stop talking about elections only and get involved in the struggle on the streets.

We also ask Left Unity get involved in calling this conference.

Keep libraries public, no volunteer led libraries, no to privatisation of libraries!

- No cuts in opening hours, no job losses
- Against cuts in all local services
- Against benefit cuts and sanctions.
- No to the privatisation and sell off of public spaces!
- Call an anti-austerity conference of anti-cuts groups, workers and the left.
- For a struggle programme and candidates against ALL austerity parties and cuts

# Workers desire to fight is seen on picket lines

LARRY BOWLES, UNITE NW106 BRANCH, NHS BROADGREEN HOSPITAL SHOP STEWARD (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

On 24 November, NHS staff staged their second four hour national strike and continued with a work to rule. This fight to gain a one per cent pay rise saw an enthusiastic picket line of 50 or more people line at Broadgreen hospital, entrances were also picketed and many other hospitals also had large numbers.

Hospital workers are no doubt up for a fight because they want stop the loss of pay, but if the trade union leaders do not step up the action we will see staff become disillusioned with the action. Four hour strikes have little impact or leverage.

As a shop steward and Unite branch

secretary I suspect the union bureaucracy are keeping the action restricted in order not to 'embarrass' the Labour Party in the forthcoming General Election. The desire for union leaders to support Labour in the elections no matter what, means they are trying to prevent longer much larger strike action.

However, continued strike action by NHS workers shows their willingness to fight.

Labour and conservatives are proposing pumping two billion pounds in to the NHS, but they have not mentioned a pay rise for staff!

The rank and file members must not be let down by the leaders of our unions.

We lost the pension fight after two strikes within 18 months, because union leaders refused to call the strike action that workers were looking for. We cannot afford to lose this fight for pay.

But the momentum can be lost as it was for a general strike. The TUC allowed it to dissipate in a puff of smoke.

We have the backing of the public and support of fine comrades from around the world.

It is the union members who put the fight in the word fight.

- **Decent Pay for NHS staff**
- **Next - a 24 hour strike!**
- **Break the link with the Labour party**



*Broadgreen hospital, one of the many lively pickets during the national NHS strike*

## Support PCS strikes

BERNARD JONES, A PCS (PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES UNION) BRANCH SECRETARY IN PERSONAL CAPACITY

The PCS has carried out a number of strikes recently and the media has portrayed them as being either related to pay or pensions. But this is not the full story.

The civil service has been a poor payer of wages, but there were benefits in the terms, conditions and pensions, which are now being reduced.

More staff than ever are being dismissed for illness (staff have been dismissed for having cancer), hospitalisation can result in dismissal if it occurs more than once - under the auspice of "unable to support absence". Errors can also result in dismissal or severe disciplinary action. Staff are not robots and can make errors due to the number of cases being dealt with - one mistake can lead to a final written warning.

Privatisation is about giving away

public services to the lowest bidder. Private providers are only interested in making profit out of welfare provision including unemployment support, health and pensions, and that means cuts.

One of the hidden elements of privatisation is related to what is known as "Shared Services". The 'lowest bidder' of a contract is able to offer such a low charge because it is stipulated that elements of the work must be based in another country.

It is entirely possible that complex human resource issues would be advised by people at a contact centre in India or elsewhere even though they are not remotely aware of how the civil service operates. They could provide advice on complex issues to managers which could lead to disciplinary action or even the dismissal of staff.

It also means that personal details such as earnings, attendance records, sexuality and race could be stored by private companies anywhere.

But the government is more than happy to award further contracts to these companies! Public bad, private good is related to an indoctrinated zeal.

The attack on civil servants is going hand in hand with the attack on benefits. Many in receipt of benefit work including workers at the Department of Workers and Pensions, because of low pay.

One of the latest areas under attack is child support. Now any single parent seeking financial support from the absent parent, will be charged for the service!

- **Decent pay for civil service workers!**
- **Public sector workers unite against job cuts and privatisation!**

# FREE EDUCATION: no fees, no cuts, no debt

CLARA SARAIVA, MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE

On 19 November, thousands of students marched on parliament against tuition fees and debt. It was the biggest student mobilisation since 2010, when large demonstrations spread throughout the country against the government's education reforms. This demonstration repeated the slogan, "FREE EDUCATION: no fees, no cuts, no debt".

Many say that there were around ten thousand students, and everyone could see it was a strong and lively protest which brought together delegations from at least 40 cities, from Aberdeen to Bristol, from Canterbury to Glasgow.

The protesters also demanded "tax the rich", "use the bank's wealth to fund education", "grants for all", and "write-off of all student debt". International students and workers fighting for their rights were also supported. "Students & workers unite and fight" was one of the prominent banners, which symbolised the student's identification with the recent worker's strikes.

The demonstration highlighted the growing crisis in the NUS (National Union of Students). Many alternative groups, like the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, different left organisations and independent student unions, built the demonstration outside of NUS control, who made a strong criticism of the march. The NUS, which is dominated by the Labour party, opposed the demonstration and they always seek to control this movement from above.



But they could not stop the action.

The repression used by the police against student protesters was violent. There were arrests and assaults including at least one student from Goldsmiths who had to go to hospital immediately following his release. Social and trade unions must condemn and demand these attacks stop, as they did in 2010.

Now is the time to plan the next steps. Student protests continued after the demonstration and a national day of action was held 3 December, with occupations in Birmingham and Warwick.

These were violently suppressed by the police, however solidarity grew across the country and the occupations were revived.

It's important that these struggles unite in action and policy, and become one national campaign against the government. For that, it's crucial that the student movement take a step forward in their organisation and call for a national congress, independent of the NUS. Students would be able then to discuss and decide democratically with elected delegates. This would be a great step to build a movement that can win.

## UCU members want to fight for pensions

UCU members in pre-92 UCU branches are fighting attacks on their USS pension scheme. The attacks are being made on a financially-viable pension fund, but the proposed changes will result in members paying more, working longer and receiving less.

Members in the USS pension were balloted, and the outcome was unequivocal: on a 45 per cent turnout, 78 per cent voted for strike action and 87 per cent for action short of strike.

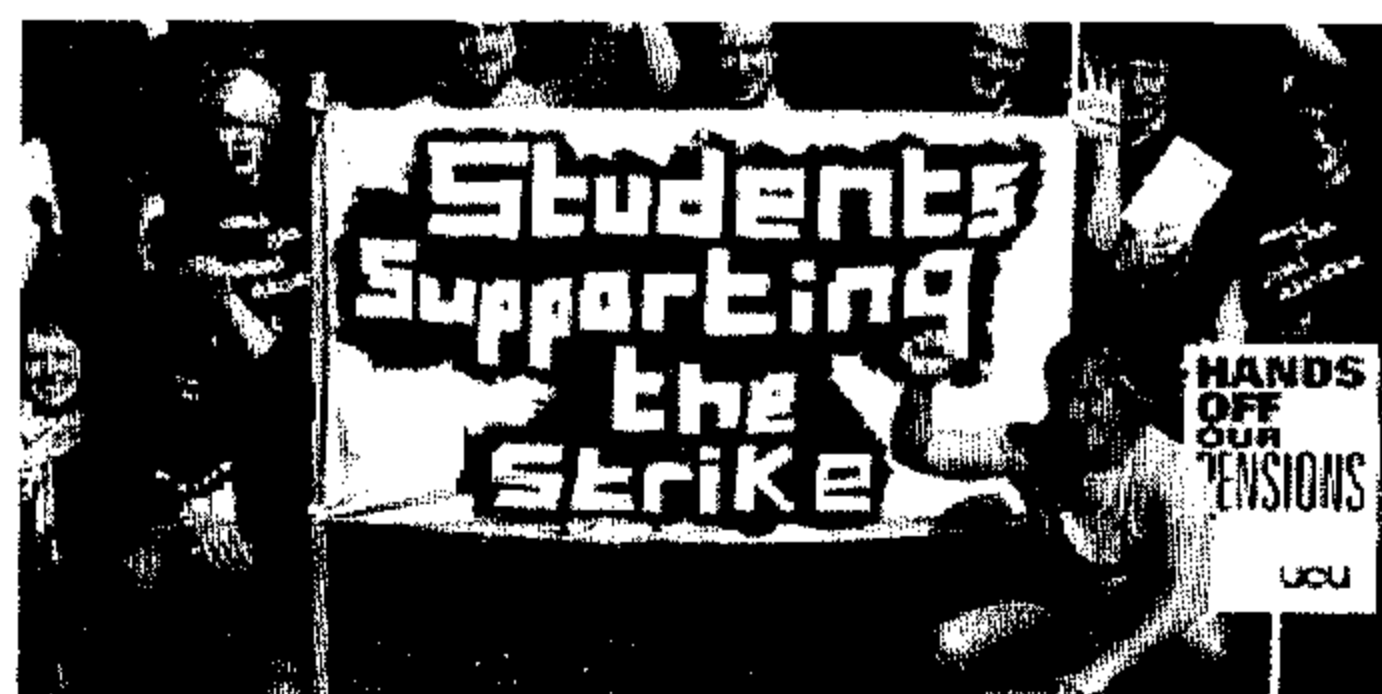
A national marking boycott began on 6 November, and was well supported, however, and at Liverpool and three other universities, management responded with a 100 per cent deduction. UCU

members at Liverpool worked without pay, but decided at a large and angry meeting to take indefinite strike action, to begin on 17 November.

However, UCU negotiators called off all national and local action, without discussing with the membership. They had made proposals to the employers' national representatives and accepted them as a basis for discussion as long as all actions was called off.

Many rank and file

members are now preparing for further strike action in January, if the talks fail. And many union activists are calling call for a special higher education sector conference to stop the retreat in the pensions struggle.



# The working class will face new challenges in 2015

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE STATEMENT

The working class and the youth will not be the beast of burden of the bosses as the deepening of the crisis threatens more budget and benefits cuts, zero-hour contracts, no pay rises and increased precarity in work for the youth.

A new recession is threatening Europe and Britain will not be able to escape the next crisis due to the volatility of the world economy and due to the measures that British capitalism has taken to 'secure' their recovery which is creating an ever more privatised unstable economy.

David Cameron raised the danger of a third recession in Europe at the G20 summit. Stagnation and recession are permanent features of the 18-member euro zone, whose combined economy is larger than that of the United States. And this is already impacting on the British economy.

The global economy is in a worse state than it was in the initial period following the Wall Street crash of September 2008, partly because the so-called emerging economies, which have provided up to 80 percent of global expansion over the past six years, are slowing down rapidly.

## Splits in the ruling class

The road out of the 2008 crisis, is plagued by these multiple problems that are producing splits in the ruling class. This is because there is a fight to see which sector can appropriate the majority of the profits in such volatile times.

The Independence referendum in Scotland was a powerful expression of this, as the Scottish middle bourgeoisie fought for a bigger portion of the cake.

Another expression is the rise of UKIP. In general the left say that UKIP is an expression of fascism, but UKIP is first of all an expression of the bourgeois sectors' dissatisfaction with their current share of profits and their need for more direct control of government to maintain their survival. UKIP is a representative

of some of the most privileged sectors such as private equity, banks and oil.

UKIP is a far-right tendency of the polarisation of the class struggle between two antagonist poles: capitalists and the working class. They want to reduce even more the working class' share of the national income as a way to give a larger share to the bourgeoisie.

However, their divisions make the bourgeoisie weaker. The old three party system is declining, and they are obliged to accept a new political

partner, ending the division between Tory and Labour, with the Liberals wavering between them. For the first time since the First World War, when Labour established itself as the political expression of the working class, a new party, UKIP has emerged, which is an expression of the profound changes that have started in Britain.

The recent skirmishes of Cameron with the EU are just an expression of the deepening crisis in the Tory Party. Cameron's speech at the G20 was a cry for help, because if the situation worsens in the months before the general election, they will lose.

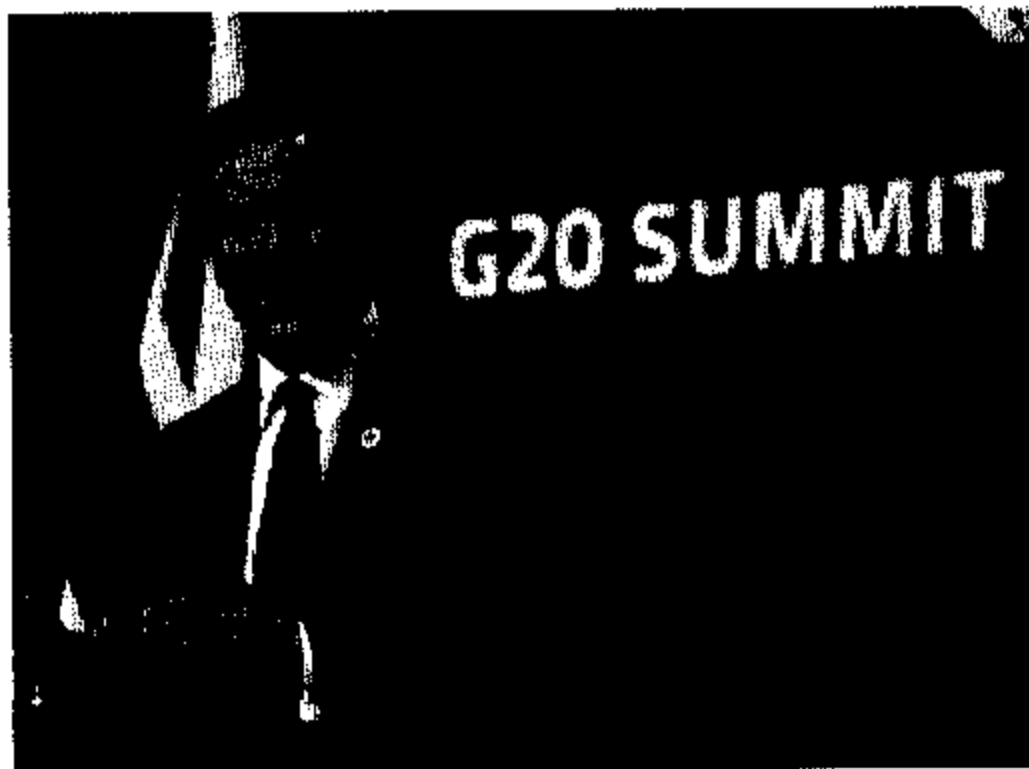
The Liberals are considerably weakened and Labour, to date, are not willing to (or cannot) begin an open war on every front against the working class. They see what has happened in Spain, Portugal and Greece where social democracy has virtually disappeared and are afraid to go down the same path. But the deepening of the crisis will leave no room for "half measures" and this is also driving Labour to crisis. Some want Miliband to go because of his loss of support in the working class, but the problem remains who can replace him?

## The working class

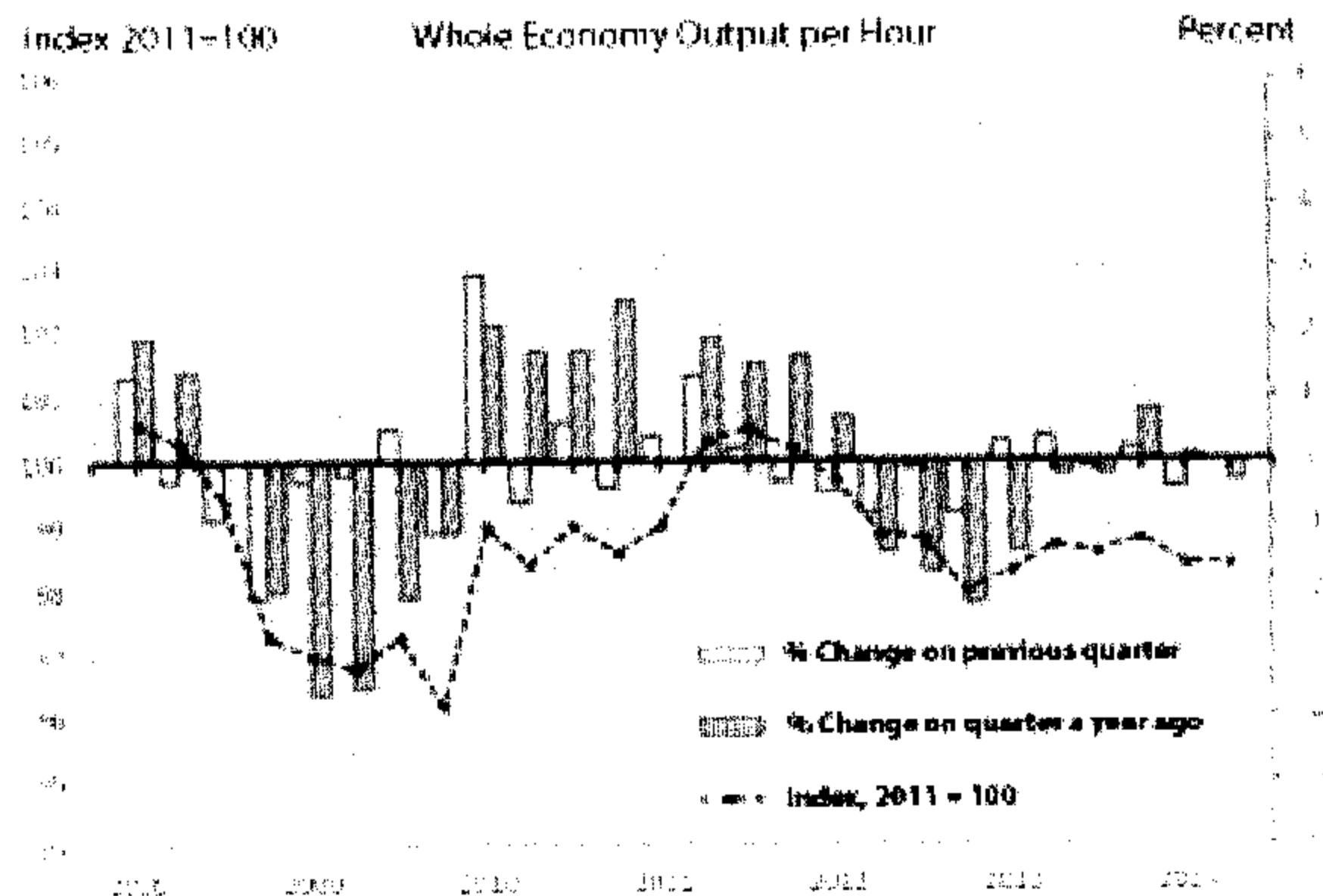
Wage loss since 2008 is the worst since records began in the 1850s, jobs are more precarious and zero-hour contracts are a reality everywhere. Only one in 40 new jobs since the recession is full time. The Social Mobility and Child Commission has predicted 2010 to 2020 will be the first decade since records began to see a rise in absolute poverty.

Welfare benefits are all being reduced and eroded. Those on benefits, the majority of whom are low waged, are being sanctioned (that is 100 percent cut in benefit). Meanwhile rents, especially in London are shooting up. In one renewal project, the New Era housing estate, owned by a US company, is threatening to evict present tenants to put rents up from £800 to £2,000 a month.

We are facing the closure and sell-

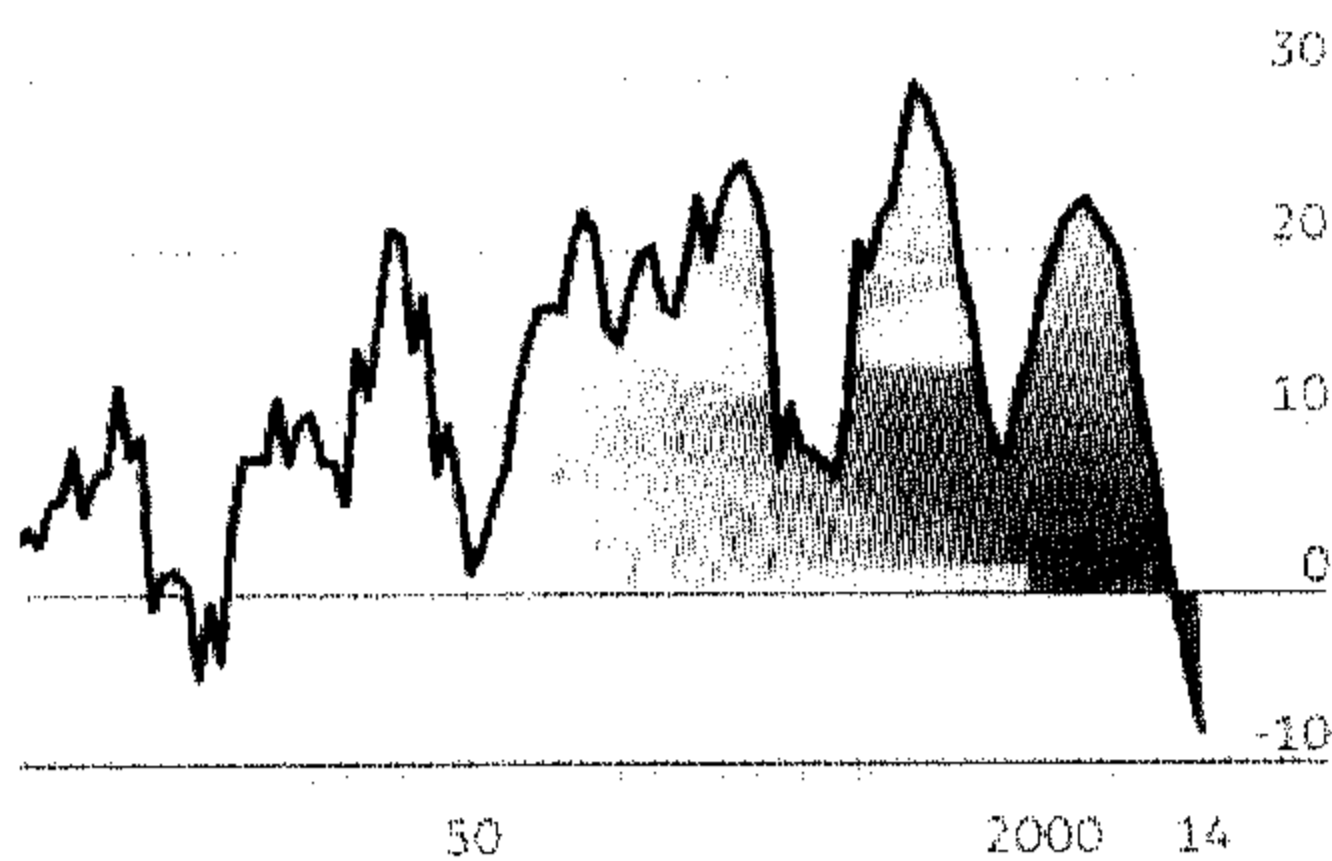


## Productive growth remains appalling



## The longest sustained fall in UK real wages since records began

UK real wages change over previous 7 years



off of children's centres, mental health services, libraries, and parks from local authority control. If the cuts continue as projected within five years many councils and communities will collapse.

### Uneven attacks

The attack on the working class is not homogeneous. The traditional industrial working class, which is the social base of the Labour party, has not felt the heaviest attacks, but their salaries and rights will be hit.

It seems that the youth are the hardest hit. They are not unionised, do not have permanent jobs, are unskilled and employed on zero-hour contracts.

Working women, Black and immigrant people are, as always, attacked by the crisis and suffer the greatest discrimination. Average women's wage is 21 per cent lower than men's, they are in the most precarious sectors, such as cleaning, and also work a double shift (workplace and home) and suffer male oppression.

That's why these sectors (youth and women) are on the frontline of the struggle. The youth's demonstration against fees, cuts and debts saw 10,000 people, who faced the police and invaded a protected area of the parliament.

In the last few months strikes have been increasing in number and working days lost in the 12 months up to September 2014, is 250 per cent higher compared to the same period in 2013. Many are victorious.

The problem remains in the union bureaucracy. The TUC and the union national leaderships are betraying all the fights, but the strikes show how powerful the pressure is from the rank and file.

London, without the support of the NUS and against them, can also be the beginning of a discussion among the students to call a national congress independent from the NUS, Labour and the TUC, to organise the fight against fees, cuts and debts.

### What should the Left do?

When we say that the crisis is making the bourgeoisie weaker it does not mean that the working class is automatically stronger. This is not because of the weakness of the working class but because of the weakness of the leadership and the policy of the left.

At this moment, when the number of strikes is increasing, the SWP and the SP centre their policy on elections. At every meeting, every demonstration or rally the SP speakers have only one call: "Join to the Trade Union Socialist Coalition".

And the SWP, in a recent article, called for the unity of the left (forgetting the working class) to fight the rise of UKIP in the general elections.

"We believe there is a basis for the left forming electoral coalitions and working together to build a stronger socialist alternative. It should be possible for all

of us on the left to group together in a single electoral coalition for the May elections."

Unfortunately there is not one national trade union for the creation of new rank and file movements that could lead to the creation of an alternative fighting union federation. The foundation of the Independent Workers Union by the cleaners in London shows the possibilities for the rank and file to break from the old unions.

The huge students' demonstration in

of us on the left to group together in a single electoral coalition for the May elections."

The "unity" they envisage is under the banner of the TUSC, that means SWP and SP leadership.

Their answer to the kind of party the working class need to defeat the bourgeoisie is a party to the left of Labour to stand in elections and send MPs to parliament.

They want to repeat the same path that Labour has taken since their foundation and led the working class to the situation we are now in. With the difference that the Labour was a real working class party and TUSC is just an umbrella.

The working class does not need to repeat an experience of over 100 years to arrive at the same conclusion they have now: electoral parties are a dead end for their liberation.

The crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the working class is more evident than ever, and shows the urgent necessity of building a working class and left alternative that could lead the workers to fight the bourgeoisie in the streets and not in the ballot box.

But this does not mean that nothing is happening. If changes are taking place in the bourgeoisie, so also are taking place in the working class.

Left Unity is an expression of the re-organisation of the working class in the political field. It is limited programmatically and organisationally – but it is a reality and it would not grow if there was no room for a new working class party.

Left Unity's leadership also want to build an electoral party "to the left of Labour", but it's open for revolutionaries to work inside it.

The challenges that face workers in 2015 are immense, but they have shown on many occasions their will to defeat the government's austerity policy and in 2015 it will be no different.



# England hear our voice: we want freedom

## Slave labour in England's prison camps

MARGARET MCADAM, INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE

“England hear our voice, we want freedom”. This was the demand of 100 detainees on 29 November 2014 following the severe beating of a detainee in Campsfield detention centre (see <http://vimeo.com/113244678>).

The protest started as guards brutally beat up a detainee and hit three or four others trying to help him. The police attended but did nothing.

Immigrants are being treated like animals, they do not get enough food or medication, and conditions are disgusting. Many say that because they are Asian their lives are in danger, “It is all racist here, all the system”.

People in UK immigration detention centres are held under administrative detention powers, that means they are not facing a criminal sentence, they are waiting a decision on their application for asylum in the UK - a legal right.

But detainees at Campsfield recognise that they are imprisoned for political reasons, “Someone, somewhere wants to win an election, they have ruined thousands and thousands of lives.”

An immigration detention centre is a prison. These facts illustrate that immigrants are bearing the brunt of the economic crisis. Parliament and capitalism want to divide workers and the scapegoating of immigrants is a mechanism to reinforce all racisms and maintain their own rule.

### Politicians encourage this

UKIP, the Con-Dem government and Labour all agree with this brutal system and inhuman treatment. UKIP's only difference with the Con-Dems or Labour is that they adopt an aggressive populist anti-immigration image in order to divide the class more efficiently, and to go onto attacking the whole of the working class.



### Legal to work - in a detention centre

These immigrants, who are denied the right to work, have this right restored in detention with wages of £1 an hour – not in cash, but by credit that can only be spent in the centre's shop. “They must think we have just got off a slave ship”.

The government raids workplaces to crack down on undocumented workers in their pursuit of “illegal” immigrants working “illegally” – yet over 900 migrants are currently allowed to work in immigration prisons.

No-one should be under the illusion that cuts in pay and the removal of rights in the workplace is restricted to immigrants. Brutal attacks on immigrants prepare the way for attacks on all workers and unemployed.

### Multi-nationals run these prisons

Campsfield, is run Mitie; Yarl's Wood and Colnbrook, by Serco; Brook House and Tinsley House, by G4S; Harmondsworth and Dungavel, by an American firm GEO. Hundreds of detainees receive a total of £45,438 for working 44,832 hours – the equivalent of 6,000 working days – in May 2014 ([www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org)).

On top of this government-run centres, Dover and Morton Hall, also employ detainees at £1 per hour, which is the figure stipulated by the UK Border Agency.

This exploitation is not lost on the detainees. However, many detainees need to work in order to afford essential toiletries, food and to make phone calls to their legal representatives.

Ralph Ojotu, a detainee, who works as a cleaner in Harmondsworth highlights the hypocrisy of the British government to ban him from working to support his two children in the ‘outside world’, and then allow him to be employed on £1 an hour.

In contrast the latest financial figures show that G4S, Serco, Mitie and GEO's US-based parent, GEO Group Inc made exorbitant profits in the 12 months to June 2014.

The UK immigration detention system is one of the largest in Europe. Over 1,000 children were detained for the purpose of immigration control in 2009. Following an outcry led by a range of childrens and human rights' campaigners this number was reduced to about 100 in 2011.

In 2012, this number increased to about 240 with the majority detained at the Cedars detention centre at Pease Pottage village near Crawley, which opened in September 2011.

This injustice must end. Everyone must have the right to work for a living wage, the right to benefits and the right to stay. We are all one working class.

- End detention centres now, documentation for all!
- Release all detainees, End solitary confinement!
- Punishment for the guards who abuse and beat up detainees!
- End inhuman treatment, deprivation of freedom and separation from families!
- Union and social inspection of detention centres!





# Left Unity Conference

MARCOS MARGARIDO, INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Left Unity held their national conference on 15 and 16 November with about 400 participants. It was a lively conference with many interventions from the floor, which reflects the current state of development of this new left alternative. The party has about 2000 members and 70 branches.

The conference approved motions and a program for various topics such as health, education, international policy, environment, crime and justice, social security and electoral strategy. This set of approved motions became the basis for LU to stand in the next general election and to consolidate itself as a left alternative to the main parties including Labour.

## Limits of the conference

But that does not solve the serious limitations of the party. A document on the national situation could have created a coherent anti-capitalist national outlook but there was no such document for the conference. This means the motions approved are not integrated by a strategic policy that would give them the necessary unity for struggle.

This lack of strategy turns the correct criticism of the capitalist system, made in most of the motions, into a policy of seeking to make capitalism more democratic instead of into a struggle for the working class and socialism.

The conference failed to say anything about the present working class struggles, such as the NHS national strike or the numerous strikes that are taking place across Britain. The conference missed an opportunity to discuss LU's intervention in these strikes with an aim of supporting striking workers and therefore creating the possibility of building the party among workers.

## Disjointed electoral strategy

The motion passed on electoral strategy removed the conference's responsibility to agree what the LU alliances would be in the general election. It passed that on to each local branch. Thus, LU may stand their own candidates, campaign with Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), support candidates from the Green Party or even campaign for Labour candidates!

This is not an accident. LU's leadership

has a conscious policy of building an electoral reformist party, because they consider that we do not live a revolutionary epoch. However, world events illustrate that we do live in a revolutionary epoch even in Europe. The ongoing struggles in Portugal, Spain or Greece could become revolutionary. Unfortunately, the Left Bloc in Portugal, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece seek another course, they think you can change capitalism by radicalising the democracy of bourgeois institutions through elections. And these are the parties which LU's leadership mirrors.

The International Socialist League, believes as Marx did in the 19th century that England is ready for a socialist revolution and this is our proposal for the basis of the construction of Left Unity: to begin to create the link between the situation today and the only way, the socialist revolution.



## Trade unionism for struggle: the rise of Cobas in Spain

Trade unionism for struggle was the title of the 3rd Co.bas (Sindicato de Comisiones de Base Co.bas – a militant union federation) congress in Spain. It was held on 15 – 16 November, in Barcelona, with delegates from Andalucía, Baleares, Catalunya, Canary Islands, Basque country, Extremadura, Madrid, Murcia.

Members are workers and unemployed, precarious and permanent staff and pensioners.

The sectors represented included public administration, construction, Madrid cleaners (buildings and premises), engineering workers, Telecommunications, Service Sector, Public Education, car workers, bus drivers and Madrid underground.

Three delegates from Liverpool TUC, Janet Bennet, Margaret McAdam and Martin Ralph, attended the conference. In addition to LTUC, there were four new Spanish unions, FSM World Federation



of Trade Unions) from Greece, and a General Motors CSP-Conlutas leader from Brazil.

Cobas was formed ten years ago as a struggle against employers, government and the CCOO (trade union federation in Spain) leadership. The subsequent years have been tough for combative class trade unionism, but in ten years of struggle, their congress document stated, "We have learnt side by side with the

workers, and from the rank and file. We have taken part, and supported struggles ranging from general strikes to 15M, Marchas de la Dignidad (March for Dignity), Plataformas de Afectados por la Hipoteca (mortgage affected collective), ecologists associations, anti-war movement... wherever there was a conflict against neoliberalism and the bosses, we have been there, because we seek to be a socially committed union.

"There is no doubt that this push for unity and struggle has favoured our growth among the working class, and earned us the recognition of many."

The conference was very lively and heard about many struggles. Delegates warmly welcomed the international visitors.

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# Podemos, a closer look at the Spanish miracle

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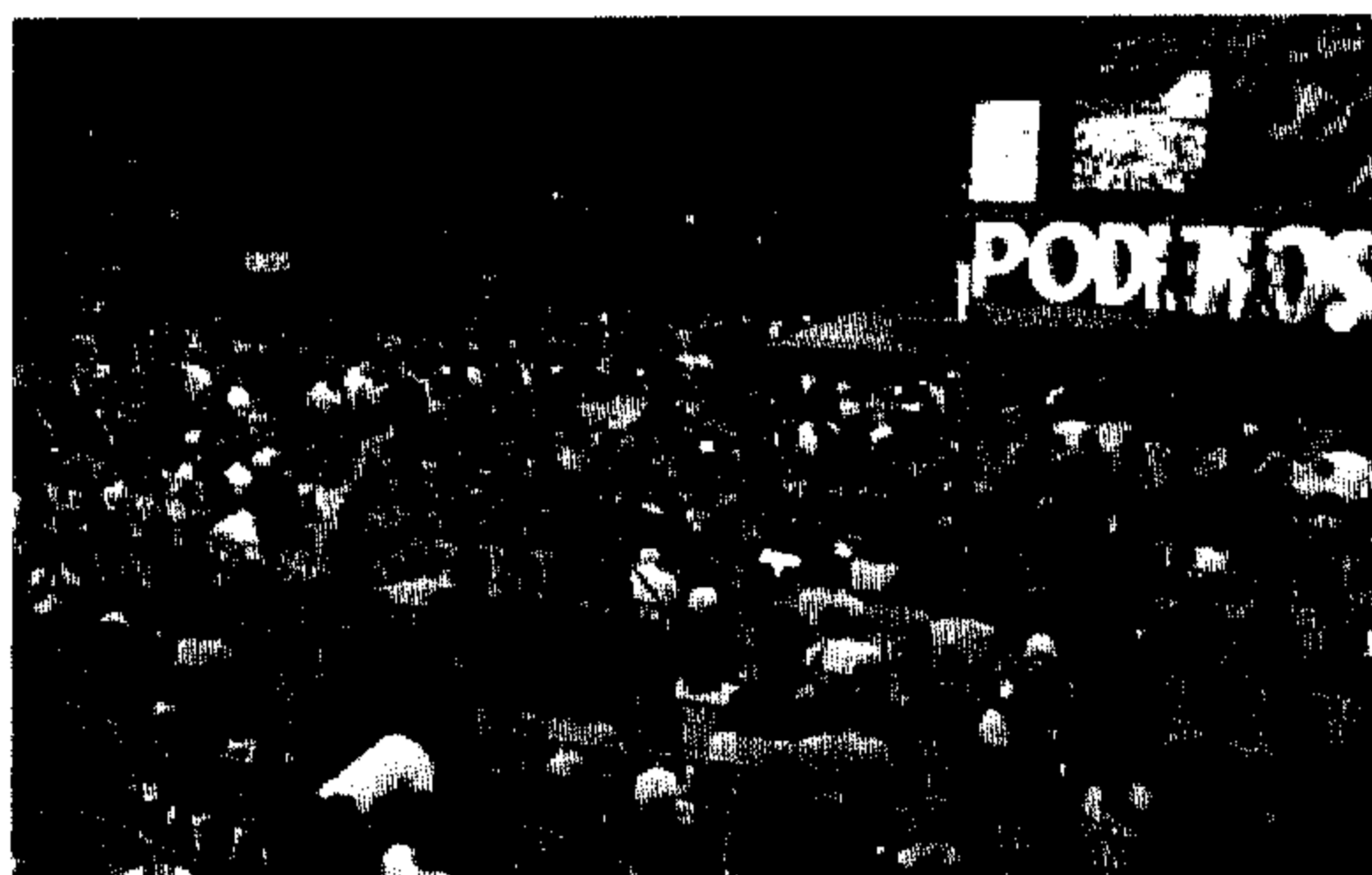
In January 2014, a group of people released what in time would become the initial manifesto of Podemos ("We Can"). It seemed to express the anger of Spaniards towards the government, but was written with deliberate ambiguities that made it flexible, so revolutionaries saw a revolutionary text, and reformists saw a reformist text.

This text was widely supported, and a lot of people started participating in the initiative. As time passed, the unknowns were resolved by Podemos taking steps towards the right. The more progressive demands were dropped from the programme, such as "Break with the EU", "Leavie the Euro". Four months of discussion gave birth to a controversial election list and a program in which there are no references to the working class.

In the European election, much to people's surprise, Podemos won 1.2 million votes, which earned them 5 Euro MPs. The initiative had skyrocketed. After this result, the path to the town council election May 2015 was set. The aim is to build challenge electorally the two main parties, by attracting those tired of the two party system of PP and PSOE (equivalent to Tory and Labour) and their scandals and policies. Also those disillusioned with the role of the institutionised Left Unity (IU, Spanish initials). Those who voted PP in the last national election hoping for a change have seen the situation get worse every day.

But as Marxists we need a deeper study. We need to know what caused this phenomenon. Who is their leadership? Which school of thought do they follow? Who forms the rank and file of Podemos? And most importantly: is it progressive or reactionary?

Podemos is led by a group of political scientists with a big impact on the



media. The leading committee of the core 25 people is a group of university teachers who established a foundation 10 years ago that has supported many governments in Latin America, as well as IU in Spain. In addition, they are supported by three important (bourgeois) communication holdings. So their claim of being new with few resources is quite false.

Their school of thought follows the trend of post-modernism and post-Marxism, and has as a guiding principle the ideas of P. K. Feyerabend: "The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: anything goes". As most of the post-modernist schools, Podemos is a reaction against Marxism. They defend populism as a guarantee of democracy. Their economic policy is for "wealth redistribution policies" to create a new social contract.

All the references to class in their programme and theory are of the middle class. That is reflected in their rank and file. The working class has not yet stirred in Spain, because of the weight the middle class has on it. The impoverished middle class, owners of SMEs, civil servants, and the labour aristocracy is where

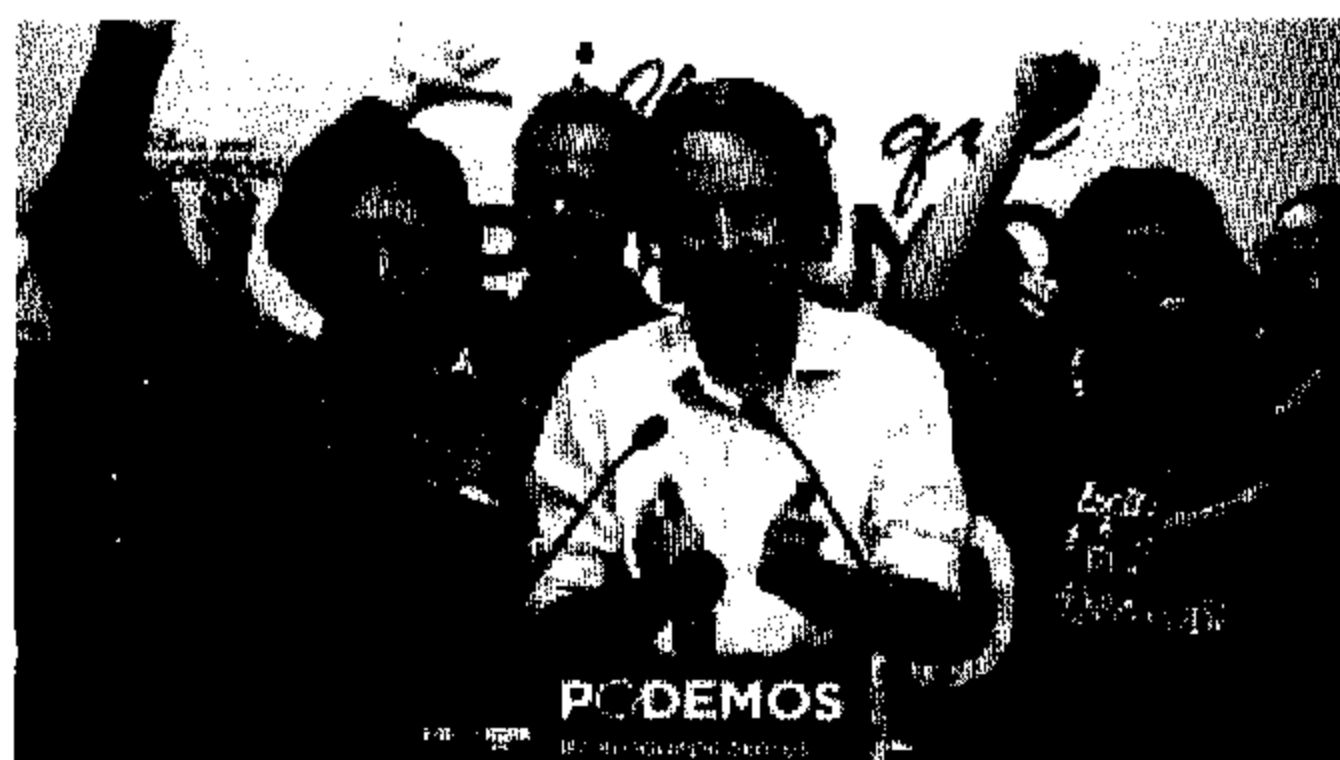
Podemos is growing, as well as among students. This is reflected in the central clause of their program: The problem is the lack of democracy and the lack of democratic control of the institutions, not the institutions themselves.

## Youth movement

The 15M Movement and the indignados started from the 2011-12 protests and became an important part of Podemos. It has a very broad composition, but within which the most progressive sector were students and precarious youth, called juventud sin futuro (youth without a future). As other movements of the youth, it faces many contradictions, they are sceptical of the parties, because part of the bureaucracy is confused with socialism, and because of the opportunist role that left parties played from the 1990s. In spite of these contradictions, 15M/indignados challenged the status quo and confronted the establishment, it was progressive.

Since it was created, IU has tried to join forces with them, but 15M never considered alliances with political parties. Podemos, was "a movement", not a party, and their policy of "the problem is lack of democracy and widespread corruption" succeeded where IU failed. It has swallowed 15M and institutionalised that struggle. It has led to a parliamentary road. This turns Podemos into a reactionary movement that is using a "democratic" cover.

The way out of this crisis cannot have a middle class leadership: without a working class leadership, We Can't.



## History is the history of class struggle

value, or by increasing the productivity of workers and thus increasing relative surplus value.

When the rise of workers organisations curbed the limitless extension of the working day, the capitalist owners turned toward building a greater control over workers in their working processes, intensifying the exploitation of labour during the working time.

At the end of the nineteenth century came the introduction of 'scientific methods of management' (Taylorism) and 'time and motion study'. All of the 'scientific methods' which have followed, including the "Japanese" methods, have built on 'Taylorism', and have had the same aim: to increase the speed-up and exploitation of the worker, which brings increased surplus value.

In the past decades, capitalist companies have increased their controlling grip on the workers' labour, imprisoned them in 'lean production', 'agile production', 'personnel engineering', flexible hours, yearly hours etc., because the relationship of class forces has been strengthened in their favour as the fighting ability of workers has been weakened by the retreats of union leaders and their repudiation of class struggle.

### Trade unions

The struggle to control the working class and change the relationship of class forces has been the overriding question for capitalist rulers, their states and governments (including Labour governments), since the end of the Second World War.

In the 1960s the Labour Minister, Barbara Castle, declared "power lies on the shop floor" and introduced In Place of Strife with its propositions to curb the rights of trade unions.

It was defeated by the angry protests of rank and file trade unionists as later, the struggle against the Tory Government's Industrial Relations Act (again curbing the power of workers' organisation) was also defeated by workers' struggle, with the miners in the vanguard.

Edward Heath, the Tory Prime Minister, went into an election, declaring the big issue to be: Who was to run the country? The government or the unions? He lost! And the unions went through one of their highest ever recruitment periods!

In 1950, there were 44.1 per cent of the

Cover of the Communist Manifesto's initial publication in 1848 in London



work force in unions. In 1972, the year of struggle against the anti-union Industrial Relations Act, the proportion was 49.4 per cent. The total continued increasing.

In 1974, the percentage of trade unionists in the labour force was 50.4. By 1976 it was 52.1.

It continued to rise, and in 1979, the year which all the political sages tell us was the year Labour lost the election because of the unpopularity of the trade unions represented 54.4 of workers—the highest it has ever been.

The rise of the trade unions in the 1970s, and their fall in the 1980s, was directly related to how they defended their members and what they could win for them.

In 1979, the Labour government and trade union leaders had imposed the conditions of wage restraint under the "social contract" to meet the demands of the International Monetary Fund. In 1979, workers resisting a decline in conditions and wages were then attacked.

Press and Tories conducted a vicious

campaign against striking workers, with malicious attacks on grave diggers' and sewage workers' strikes. The leaders made no real defence of their members, in fact, Labour leaders and trade union leaders contributed to the attack.

The press campaign against the strikes during what they called the "Winter of Discontent" frightened union and Labour leaders, with a labour movement leadership already in retreat, the Tories won the election.

### Retreat in the 1980s

Retreat turned into a rout. Following the Tory's electoral victory, the powerful resistance to their policies in the early part of the decade was defeated.

Trade union leaders began with boasts of resistance at the end of the 1970s. Hundreds of thousands of British workers demonstrated in Glasgow, in Liverpool and Cardiff in mighty demonstrations of opposition

to unemployment.

The demonstrations were called by the Labour Party and the TUC. Soon, the TUC leaders were to show how valueless were words against the anti-labour laws.

Union membership declined steadily. By 1990, it was down to 38 per cent of the work force. It is very clear that the retreats of the leadership in face of increasing unemployment and workers' struggles were the major reason for the decline.

Through the retreats of leaders, the class relationship of forces was changed in favour of capitalism and the offensive against working class wages, employment and the social wage and the 'free market' programme of privatisation was carried through.

That this offensive came earlier and went further in Britain than in other European countries poses for us all the sharper the question of an alternative leadership in the unions, based on the truths of the class struggle, building principled internationalist unions, with independent class policies.

# Bill Hunter's Archives

## The Communist Manifesto History is the history of class struggle

In 1999 the International Socialist League published a pamphlet by Bill Hunter that was called 150 years of the Communist Manifesto. It was part of a series of pamphlets called the Roots of Marxism. These pamphlets examined how Marxism developed in theory and in practice.

We are publishing here the second of three parts for readers and for those now coming forward to join the ISL, as the pamphlet was meant to be an introduction to this famous work of Marx and Engels.

The ISL is holding regular sessions on Marxism and if any reader is interested in attending please contact us.

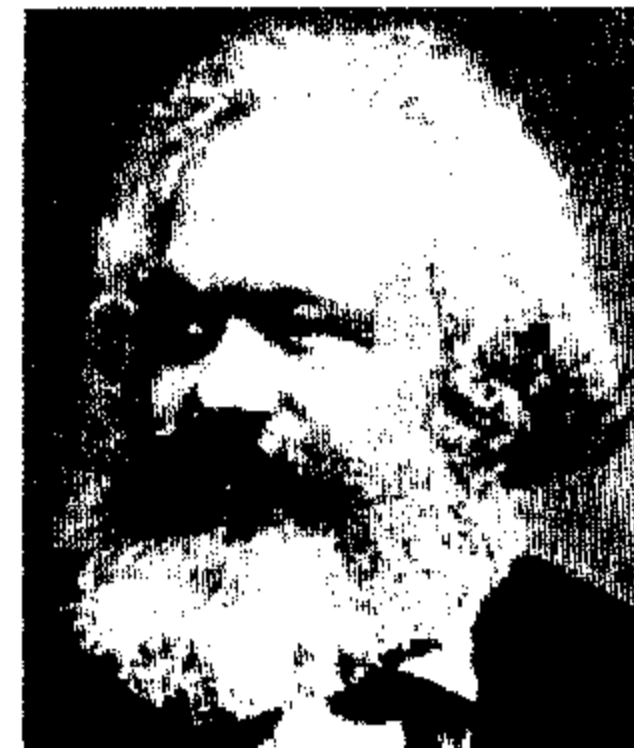
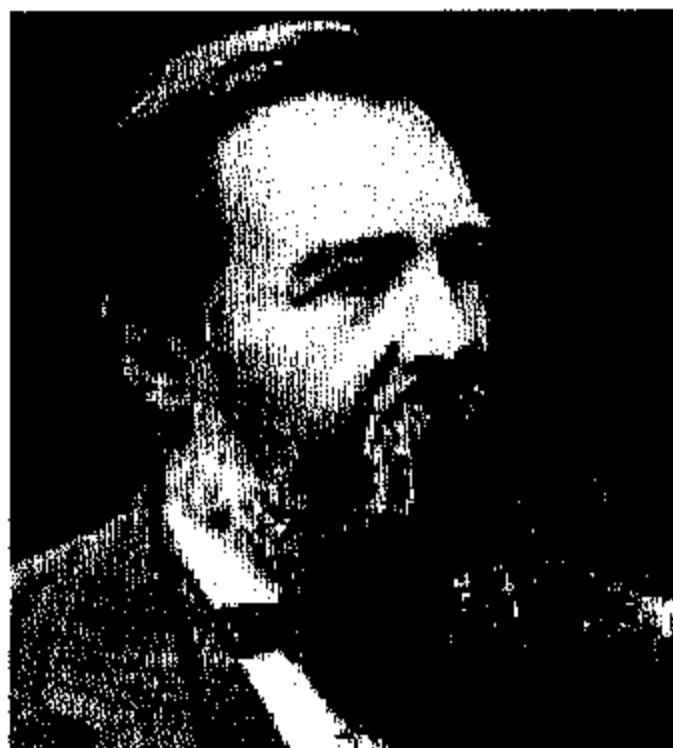
That "History is the history of class struggle", is a central conclusion in The Communist Manifesto. As we have said, Marxism has repeatedly been declared dead and buried and never more strongly than in the last few years.

During the post-war boom, there was a sizeable part of the 'Marxist' or 'radical' sociologists who declared that the working class had been bought off and 'bourgeoisified'. Then, in the 1970's, they said this class was disappearing in 'post industrial' society. In either case, they had the same conclusion that it was less and less, or even not at all, a force for social change.

So, history could no longer be the history of class struggle and the relationship of class forces no longer a determining factor in society. They concluded that the working class was no longer capable of being the main force for socialism and that capitalism had a strength and viability, displayed through its technological development that was not foreseen by Karl Marx.

But it is in grasping hold of this conclusion that history is the history of class struggle, that gives us, in fact, the key to understanding what has happened in the period since the Second World War.

In capitalist society, there is an irreconcilable conflict between worker and capitalist; Labour and Capital,



which comes out of the nature of a class based society, where the means of production are owned by a tiny minority. The tendency of capitalism is to push the exploitation of labour beyond the limits of human endurance. It has been checked and forced back only by the resistance and organisation of labour.

The early expansion of capitalist production during the Industrial Revolution at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, before the mass of the working class developed their organisations on any large or permanent scale, shows us very clearly that because of the nature of capitalist ownership and capital's ruthless drive for profit, it has an inherent tendency to drive the use of labour power to the limits of human endurance and beyond, both in relation to the worker's hours of work and in the intensification of his labour.

In the first volume of Capital, in the chapter The Working Day, Marx described a century and a half of struggle to determine the working day and the transformation of workers from craftsmen working for themselves for four days a week, with their own means of production, into factory workers.

The general working week of the worker at the beginning of the eighteenth century was four days a week. Marx writes:

"Throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century down to the period when large scale industry began, capital in England had not yet succeeded in getting possession of the whole of the workers week in return for the payment of the weekly value of his labour power

– except in the case of the agricultural labourers. The fact that they could live for a whole week upon the wages of four days did not seem to the workers any reason why they should work the other two week-days for the capitalists."

### Organisation

By economic and legislative means, the old life of masses of men women and children was destroyed. At the end of the eighteenth century the conditions of the mass of people was much worse than it was at the beginning.

The history since is one of the ebb and flow of struggle: what was gained and held, depended on the strength of organisation of the working class and the relationship of class forces.

It took well over a hundred years of struggle to establish eight hours as the normal working day, which was established among organised workers in the years immediately following the First World War.

However, it has to be pointed out that the normal working day of eight hours, is a conception which modern capitalism has been breaking down in the last three decades, with its frenetic increase of flexible labour, casual labour, individual contracts and flexible hours.

These facts are very much connected with the progress of class struggle and the relationship of forces between employers and workers.

Capitalism extracts surplus value from labour out of which comes rent, interest and profit. In its history, it has done that, either by the lengthening of the working day, which increases the absolute surplus