

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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wave** page 3



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Anti-capitalist protestors occupy city centres across the world

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Santiago: 100,000 march

10,000 in Berlin

Lisbon: 40,000 demonstrate

Strike on 30 November! Fight the cuts!

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 and bisexual people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
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Syria: the regime erodes

By Dan Katz

Seven months and more than 3,000 deaths after the people of the southern city of Deraa rose against the Syrian dictatorship, the struggle continues.

The amazing bravery of the Syrian people has been fuelled by contempt for the incompetent, stupid, lying regime and a strong desire for freedom.

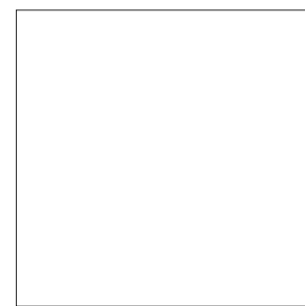
The opposition has now constituted itself into a more coherent front, the Syrian National Council (SNC), which was announced in Turkey on 3 October. The SNC is similar to the Libyan TNC and includes democrats from the Damascus Declaration for

Democratic Change and the Local Coordination Committees, as well as Kurds and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. The SNC says it stands for, "judicial independence, press freedom, democracy and political pluralism".

The SNC has received formal backing from the new Libyan government and encouraging words from the EU.

The largely peaceful protesters have begun to use weapons to defend themselves. A number of areas in Homs are now being patrolled by local militias.

An increasing number of army defectors have joined the opposition to Assad and have begun to fight. At the start of October 250 de-



serters fought a vicious battle with regular soldiers in Rastan. As the army took back control many buildings were destroyed in the town of 40,000. Apparently 3,000 residents have been arrested.

The sense that Syrians will need to fight the regime rather than petition it while waiting for change seems to be growing. Syria

may be slipping towards much more violence.

Syria is increasingly isolated internationally. Although Russia and China have protected Syria from harsher sanctions by using their ability to obstruct in the United Nations, they have become increasingly, openly critical. Last week China publicly called on Assad to "reform".

The violence in Syria also seems set to be raised in the Arab League.

The Arab League is an ineffective organisation, but the significance of this move is that Saudi Arabia is set to use the Syrian issue to make propaganda against Iran, Syria's close ally and the Saudis' main worry in the region.

Australian Labor activists demand reform

By Janet Burstall

A "Labor Renewal" movement was launched in capital cities across Australia on 8 October, aiming to push democratic reforms through biennial conference of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in December.

The campaign sets five general aims, and more specifically demands implementation of the recommendations of Labor's

official review of its own organisation, published in February 2011.

Kevin Rudd's possible aspirations for a Blair-like comprehensive restructuring of the ALP, and radical marginalisation of the unions, have faded, for now. Probably worried by the decline in ALP membership — after a modest rise of about 13% in 2003-7, it declined 22% between 2007 and 2010 — the Bracks-Carr-Faulkner review proposes a tilt back

towards democracy. It recommends:

"That... state and territory conferences be solely based on the principle of 50 per cent representation for members and 50 per cent representation for [union] affiliates. That the practice of including additional delegates from administrative committees, policy committees, Young Labor, and the parliamentary parties in the members' component cease".

"That intervention in

Party preselections by the National Executive and state administrative committees only occur as a last resort, rather than a first resort, and then only in exceptional circumstances".

At the Sydney launch, several people asserted that the point is not simply getting Labor in, but what Labor does when it is in.

Many expressed their disappointment with Labor in government.

• laborrenewal.org

"Consumer democracy" in France

By Colin Foster

Nearly three million people took part in each of the French Socialist Party's two rounds of voting to choose its presidential candidate for 2012.

The SP's "primary" was partly modelled on the US primary system, but with a big difference. In most states of the USA, voters are obliged to declare a party affiliation when they register to vote (though they can register as "other"), and a Democrat or Republican affiliation gives them the right to vote in Democrat or Republican primaries.

The SP devised its own system of qualifying to vote in its primaries: voters had to pay one euro and sign a declaration of support for "the values of the left".

Ed Miliband's scheme to have "registered supporters" vote in Labour Party leadership elections is a pale version of the same idea. It has an additional downside, that in the Labour Party all the "leadership" functions are concentrated in one person. The SP has a "leader" — its "first secretary" — who is

elected by the party, a different person from its presidential candidate, or president or prime minister if in office.

The SP is delighted with the turnout for the "primaries", which was more than expected, and much more than the SP's 200,000 membership.

Turnout was strongest in the south-west, in Brittany, and in Paris, and weakest in parts of eastern France, more or less in line with the SP's electoral map. Anecdotally, turnout is reported to have been sizeable in the poorer working-class suburbs, where the organisation of the SP, despite its historic links with the labour movement, has long been weak.

The exercise has been praised by people beyond the SP as an advance in democracy and "a new way of doing politics".

It showed that, like it or not, parliamentary-reformist and vaguely "social" politics of the SP's type still have a grip.

But new democracy it is not. The voters have no control over what the selected presidential candidate does. Their vote is a passive "consumer" democracy, and much less

than the active control that party members of a democratic mass party can, through democratic debate, exercise over the party's candidates and representatives.

Six candidates ran in the first round on 9 October, and then François Hollande defeated Martine Aubry in the run-off on 16 October.

Armand Montebourg, who appeared the most left-wing of the candidates, won 17% in the first round, though on a nationalistic programme ("deglobalisation").

The tone of the contest was a shade more left-wing

than Labour politics in Britain. Aubry denounced Hollande as "soft left" and a "candidate of the system".

That is not a merit of the primary system, but an attempt to respond to the mood of French voters. In France, only 30% of people will tell pollsters that the capitalist market is the best way of running economic life, while in Britain, the USA, Germany (and China!), around 60% do.

None of the SP presidential candidates proposed any clear-cut working-class policies, even on a reformist level.

Brent libraries campaign

The High Court ruled on 13 October that Brent Council's plan to shut six of its 13 libraries, in order to save £1m, was not illegal.

A campaign to defend the libraries had delayed the cuts through legal challenges, but had also discussed occupying the libraries, a fact that Labour-ruled Brent surely knew.

While the council have closed the libraries, they

are not in full control of two of them. Through constant vigils since the High Court decision Preston library campaigners have prevented the removal of computers, and at Kensal Rise council workers have not been able to board the library up as users maintain a round-the-clock cordon.

The campaigners are appealing the High Court decision.

• More: www.savekensalriselibrary.org/

Strike wave explodes in Greece

By Theodora Polenta

A wave of occupations, strikes, demonstrations and other forms of action is erupting across Greece against the cuts imposed by the Pasok government.

New cuts are to be voted on in Parliament on 20 October. Every day additional measures are added to the package.

New taxation will cost an average Greek family 1500 to 2000 euros annually, or more than a month and a half's wages.

Utility workers and trade unionists have occupied the printing offices of the utility company GENOP-DEH in an attempt to block and disrupt the printing and distribution of the regressive property tax bills, which were to be added to electricity bills.

The one-day occupation was ended when the government "discovered" the money to hand over the printing of the property tax bills to a private company.

The occupation epitomised the solidarity and fraternity of what are considered as more "privileged" sections of the working class (utility workers) with the most vulnerable members of the society.

Transport workers have staged a 48-hour strike. Re-

fuse collectors are entering their third week of occupations and strikes.

Archaeologists and workers in the ministry of culture struck for 48 hours and occupied the Acropolis.

There are on-going occupations of ministries, offices, and utility buildings. Lawyers are on a seven-day strike.

The wave of struggles is expected to intensify this week and Greece is to shut down on the 19-20 October with a two-day nationwide general strike called by ADEDY (public-service union federation) and GSEE (private sector counterpart).

**EXTEND
ADEDY initially announced a 24-hour strike for 19 October.**

The pressure of the rank and file has forced them to extend the general strike to 20 October, which coincides with the day that the new austerity measures are to be voted on by the parliament.

Transport workers and taxi drivers are to stop work on 19 and 20 October. Railway workers are to strike on 18-20 October. Lorry drivers have announced a 24-hour strike on 19 October.

Air traffic controllers are

to strike on 19-20 October. Seafarers will leave ferries tied up at ports on 17-18 October and threaten to extend their action further. Port workers have a 48-hour strike on 19-20 October.

Tax collectors are striking from 17 to 20 October. Bank workers have announced a 48-hour strike on 18-19 October.

Custom officers have announced two 24-hour strikes, on 17 and 18 October, despite their strike being declared illegal. Their plan to start a 10-day strike was blocked by threats to fine their union.

Teachers have a 48-hour strike on 19-20 October and have voted for a further three-day strike on 24-26 October. From 17 October teachers have occupied the ministry of education.

Doctors are to strike until 21 October. Lawyers are to strike until 19 October. Judges will join the strike actions from 17 October, shutting down each day between 12 and three until 20 October.

Shop keepers are shutting their shops on Wednesday 19 October.

Workers, on the one side, and capitalists, business people, financial speculator, and bondholders, on the other, are not in it together.

The Greek workers did not evade their taxes. The Greek workers have not received billions from the state as the bankers and the Greek capitalist asset-strippers have. The Greek workers did not participate in the Siemens corruption scandal. The Greek workers did not benefit from the Olympic Games; the corporations did.

The Greek workers did not want their taxes spent on submarines. The Greek workers did not want their money spent on interventions in Iraq or Afghanistan. The Greek workers are refusing to pay for the crisis.

The periodic 48-hour strikes called by the union bureaucracy are not enough.

The number of Greek workers on the streets and in occupations and strikes is much bigger than in May 2010, when the first government cuts plan was launched, and much bigger than in June 2011.

The next step should be a continuous general strike alongside the poor peasants, the ruined small shopkeepers, the pensioners, the unemployed, the school and university students, and the neighbourhood community movements.

In every workplace,

workers should form committees in order to organise and direct their struggle from below. A central organ that supports, organises, coordinates and defends every struggle, should be formed.

It is of crucial importance that workers create and empower their own organs and structures of struggle in order to safeguard themselves against the hesitancy of the union bureaucracy.

**UNITED
The occupation of the offices of GENOP-DEH in order to disrupt the distribution of the regressive property tax bills to the most vulnerable sections of the working class is a manifestation of workers' solidarity and demonstrates the potential of the power of a workers' united front.**

Parliament does not have the answers to the workers' needs and demands. A New Democracy (ND, Tory) government or an emergency coalition government would follow exactly the same policies.

The solution lies in the power of workers' struggles. As the struggles evolve and escalate the workers are looking at solutions, to defend their lives and rights, outside the "whole system" and its

laws and structures. It is essential for the revolutionary left, not only to participate in and observe the struggles, but to help organise, coordinate, support, defend, escalate and politicise the struggles. The revolutionary left should be at the vanguard of all the struggles and win the workers to a radical, anti-capitalist programme of transitional demands:

- Abolish the debt. Not a penny to the creditors
- Freeze and abolish workers' debts
- Civil disobedience and refusal to pay government-imposed taxes
- Nationalisation under workers' control of the banks and the big business with no compensation
- Workers' control of prices, wage increases, reduction in working hours, work for all
- Pension increases in line with wages, reduction in the age of retirement
- Ban redundancies. Unemployment benefit in line with wages
- For a public sector in the service of the people and society's needs against today's public sector tied up with corporations, contractors and corruption
- For an extension of education, health, transportation and welfare state provision.

Refuse workers lead the fightback

By Theodora Polenta

As of 17 October, the strike and occupation by refuse workers is entering its third week. The workers are fighting to secure their jobs, to stop the privatisation of refuse collection and disposal services, and to defend their wages and working conditions.

The new multiple levels of taxation in combination with their already-reduced wages have resulted into some refuse workers receiving net monthly pay of 192 euros. One refuse worker recently received net monthly pay of 1 euro.

The government is threatening to change the law and hand over refuse collection and disposal services to privateers. A scheme is to be introduced from December to hand to the private sector the total responsibility of the refuse collection and disposal for the next 20 to 25 years.

If the plans for privatisation go ahead, then 1600 refuse workers in Athens and 700 in Thessaloniki will be losing their jobs.

As of 17 October, the refuse workers are entering

their third week of occupations and strikes. For the last two weeks refuse workers have occupied the main landfills, in Athens and Thessaloniki, in order to control the vans that dispose of the rubbish.

Refuse workers have refused to collect any rubbish from the streets apart from outside hospitals, schools and markets.

The majority of the Greek population is on the workers' side. They can see that "all the workers are in it together" against the attacks of the government and the EU-ECB-IMF Troika.

The government has started a concentrated attempt to break the refuse workers' dispute.

Judges were asked to declare illegal the refuse workers' occupations and strikes. The ongoing lawyers' strike has postponed the intervention.

Government officials have threatened the refuse workers with stoppage of pay if they continue their occupations. The Minister of Health has requested that any refuse worker refusing to dispose rubbish should be arrested.

The government has said

that if any member of the public becomes infected due to the piling up of rubbish in the street, then the refuse workers are liable to over 10 years in prison.

The government has hired scabs to collect and dispose of the rubbish. Police were employed to protect the scabs.

Despite a heavy police presence, escorting the private lorries, the refuse workers, with the help and active support of their communities, have managed to prevent the majority of the collection of rubbish taking place. Most of the private companies decided to withdraw! The few private companies that collected rubbish had to struggle with its disposal, as over 500 refuse workers occupied the main landfills.

On 15 October, the police entered the occupied landfills and broke the occupations by forcibly removing the refuse workers.

Despite their bickering and arguing in the parliament, the right-wing opposition parties have aligned with the government in their attempt to break the occupation.

The Greek media ap-

plauded the scabs and spread the racist lie that refuse workers were leading the collection of the rubbish. A statement of solidarity for the refuse workers' struggle by representatives of refugee communities has shut them up.

**CONTINUE
Despite all the attacks on them, the refuse workers are continuing their indefinite strikes and occupations and continuing the disruption of the scabs' work.**

Virtually all the private companies had given up on rubbish collection by Monday 17 October.

The refuse workers have vowed to carry on their occupations and strikes "until this government is overthrown and our future is secure".

The struggle of the refuse workers is an inspiration to the whole working class. It has shown where the real power lies. The workers can be in command and control of their jobs. The struggle of the refuse workers is challenging the way society is currently run. It is a demonstration that the

workers can and should be in control of their workplaces and their lives.

The piling up of uncollected rubbish in Athens and Thessaloniki is a living proof of the social value of the refuse workers' currently devalued jobs. The occupation and control of the landfills (in direct violation of Greek laws) by the refuse workers is a blueprint for the struggles to come.

The whole of the political establishment is alarmed because the refuse workers did not only rely on legalised forms of struggles but also took control of their workspace and redefined the laws under which the refuse collection and disposal service would be run.

Victory for the refuse workers would have a domino effect and boost the confidence of all the working class.

After the failure of the private companies to act as scabs, the government is threatening to use the army as scabs.

The refuse workers are currently stepping up their struggle, blocking all private lorries, occupying

public buildings and major halls, organising and setting up in every work place committees of self-defence. In parallel, in an act of unprecedented class solidarity, citizens, local activists and other workers are blocking the roads and preventing private lorries collecting rubbish from their neighborhoods.

The government is not concerned about the rubbish. The government is mostly concerned about other sections of the working class being inspired and following the example of the refuse workers' struggle.

The Greek workers should make their fears reality! Every working-class sector should follow the determination of the refuse workers and escalate their struggles by calling continuous strikes, occupying their work places and setting up strike and self-defence committees.

"We are all refuse workers"! Let's shut down Greece on 19-20 October. Let's send the government, the Troika, and the whole lot of them to the dustbin of history!

Fox: real story and tabloid story



Press Watch
By Pat Murphy

A man with no visible means of support manages to make a living in a pretend job funded by “charitable” funds.

His job involves travelling (first class) around the world, misleading people into thinking he is an adviser to a government minister. He abuses this stolen privilege to help foreigners decide what is supposed to be British foreign policy. The perfect story, you would think, for rabid denunciation by the *Express*, *Sun* or *Mail*? Or investigation by the Taxpayers’ Alliance? Apparently not.

It was left to the *Guardian* to expose what Adam Werritty was up to, to reveal that Defence Minister Liam Fox was complicit in Werritty’s behaviour and that together they were pursuing their own independent foreign and defence policy. Or, to be more accurate, the policies urged upon them by a cabal of international corporations and right-wing lobby groups.

But, to be fair, we can’t expect the *Express* or *Mail* to spot this kind of behaviour when there is no evidence that the culprit is an immigrant, an asylum seeker or even East European? And the challenge is even greater when the attempt to shape foreign policy is not motivated by a desire to align it better with the interests of the dreaded European Union but instead with those of the United States and Israel.

When the Tory press finally realised they could not ignore the Liam Fox story there was a brief attempt to explain away the corruption with motives they could more easily condemn. Why, it was suggested, did Fox allow Werritty to travel everywhere with him and even stay in the same hotels when he didn’t take his wife on these trips? Wasn’t there a question about Fox’s sexuality some years earlier?

It was revealed on 12 October that Fox had lied last year when his flat was burgled overnight and he claimed that he had been the only occupant. In fact there had been another man staying with him. Was this Werritty? You could feel the *Sun* and a number of other papers wish it so. The story that could not be ignored could at least be better managed if it could be turned into a tale of good old-fashioned infidelity and sexual repression.

It became obvious that Fox’s overnight guest was not Werritty, but that did not halt the sharpening of the homophobic knives. The *Sun* claimed that officials had missed a “key detail” of the burglary. “They insisted the embattled Defence Secretary was sleeping there ALONE at the time. But *The Sun* can reveal a ‘younger man’ was staying overnight at the posh London Bridge apartment.” Obviously it is possible to sleep alone and have someone else staying in your house, but the *Sun* wants to suggest otherwise.

By 16 October the identity of the overnight guest was revealed as ex-soldier 44-year-old Graham Livesey — younger than Fox but not by much. Even the more sedate *Telegraph* couldn’t resist alluding to this aspect of the story. Matthew D’Ancona remarked oddly that “His intense male friendships — Edwardian in character — would have been entirely his own business had the relationship with Werritty not become something plainly unacceptable.”

Meanwhile the *Guardian* and *Observer* continued to pur-

sue the real story. The extent to which Fox was in cahoots with hawkish financial and political interests was actually quite staggering. The organisation he set up to promote the UK-US special relationship, Atlantic Bridge, was funded and advised by a gruesome collection of ultra-right-wing US republicans, venture capitalists and special interest lobbyists. It was promoted by security investors, climate change deniers and speculators in health and education looking forward to the privatisation of public services. Werritty himself was directly funded, according to the *Observer*, by Poju Zabludowicz, chair of pro-Israel lobby group the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM). He was also funded by a private investigations company staffed by former M16 officers and set up by an Afrikaner “security specialist”.

The web that interconnects rapacious privatisers and free market ideologues with Tory ministers is the real story here. The *Guardian* has done us a service by revealing the extent to which elected politicians owe their loyalties not to the people who put them there but to those with the greatest wealth and power in society. That this story unfolded just as thousands of people built a movement to occupy Wall Street which then spread across the US and the world makes it all the more significant.

No innuendo required, no doubt about the dividing line. Fox, Werritty and their friends in the media are part of the 1% who control the world’s wealth and assets. The rest of us are the 99% who can only live by working to make them richer. We need to replace all of them and their rotten system.



Letters

The real Serge

Martyn Hudson (*Solidarity 220*) goes much further than Serge did in claiming continuity between the regime established after the 1917 workers’ revolution and Stalinism.

Serge answered those who argued that “the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at its beginning” by stating that “To judge the living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in the corpse — and which he may have carried in him since his birth — is that very sensible?” But Serge’s “germs” are for Martyn a full-blown infection, if not the stench of gangrene.

Martyn argues that some civil war practices of the first workers’ state “all point to the affinity between Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin rather than the reverse”. He states that “Stalinism was born of the workers’ movement”. I think he is utterly wrong about this, conflating the movement of class forces with biography and chronology. And Martyn has misrepresented Serge’s views.

Suzi Weissman states that “Serge did not see Stalinism as the natural outgrowth of Leninism, but rather as the corruption of it”. In his last essay, ‘Thirty Years After the Russian Revolution’ (1947), Serge wrote of certain characteristics of Bolshevism that “gave it an innate superiority over its rival parties”, including its Marxism, commitment to working class hegemony, internationalism and unity of thought and action. Serge defended the suppression of Kronstadt and drew a positive balance on the first 10 years of the regime. Serge was at pains to point out the contrast before and after 1927 — for example between Lenin’s prisons and Stalin’s mass forced labour camps.

Serge described the Stalinist takeover as a “coup de force” and as a break with the post-1917 regime. He dubbed as “reactionaries” those who confused “Stalinist totalitarianism — exterminator of the Bolsheviks — with Bolshevism itself” and specifically emphasised the “favourable historical circumstances” which led to the rise of Stalinism. Serge did criticise some mistakes of Bolsheviks. His comments deserve discussion on their merits (though, for the record, I think his points were limited). But the weight of his critique was still on the river of blood between Bolshevism and Stalinism, not on continuity.

Martyn contrasts Serge’s “early insights into a bureaucratic collectivist analysis of the USSR” with Trotsky’s view that it remained a degenerated workers’ state. But Serge’s book *Destiny of a Revolution* (1937) shared Trotsky’s analysis and was a companion volume to his *Revolution Betrayed*, which Serge translated. By the time of his death in 1947, Serge would talk of exploitation in the USSR and of a “bureaucratic police state” and “bureaucratic totalitarianism with collectivist leanings”, though he was imprecise about whether the bureaucracy was a new class or a caste.

Trotsky’s own prognosis in the final year of his life pointed

towards a new class society if the USSR survived the war, but he was killed in 1940. Weissman’s excellent biography suggests Serge’s view was inspired by among others Trotsky and the dissident Trotskyist Max Shachtman. Serge’s comments are worthy of note, but they were not well-developed. Nor were they, on their own, the basis of a more adequate account of Stalinism. For that, Trotsky and Shachtman’s group remain the key referents.

Serge is undoubtedly part of our tradition. But Martyn would do better to inform readers of what Serge actually wrote, rather than attribute views to Serge that he did not appear to hold.

Paul Hampton, London

Blame capitalism, not Jobs

Jérôme E Roos (*Solidarity 220*) rightly argues that the almost cult-ish response to the death of Steve Jobs earlier this month represents a highly developed commodity fetishism amongst fans of Apple products.

I do not share the brand identification-cum-cult membership of some Apple users, but I do own an iPhone for purely functional reasons. I find it efficient at accessing emails on the move, checking the news and, yes, organising political activity.

The development of mobile technology, facilitating the spread of social networking capacities and the means of communication is a progressive step, and I would hope that under socialism we decide to create similar devices. As Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*: “The ever expanding union of the workers... is helped on by the improved means of communication, that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes.”

Central to Marx’s thought is the dialectic of progress and destruction which characterises capitalist expansion. Under capitalism this technological development comes at a massive human cost. At its most extreme, child labour, coercion and even suicides; on a lesser but still tragic level, soul-destroying drudgery and a crippling of the human spirit. Apple is a particularly egregious offender but it is not unique.

The problem is not just individual capitalists such as Steve Jobs or for that matter Bill Gates but capitalism itself. One of the many tragedies of the Apple story is that the way society is currently organised makes the creation of useful technologies dependent on the immiseration of millions, and the leisure of some the product of the toil of others.

So shall I throw this laptop out of the window and snap my phone in two? That might assuage my conscience but it would not advance the interests of our class one centimetre. I need both devices and would end up enriching another set of capitalists by replacing them.

Following the logic of the consumer boycott within capitalism will lead us all back to the Dark Ages. Such modern day “reactionary socialism” represents an attempt to declare individual sovereign independence from the system and, by implication, moral culpability for its crimes. It’s an essentially selfish response.

We should substitute active solidarity for passive attempts to remove oneself from the capitalist system. We should sup-

port groups such as the *Chinese Labour Bulletin* in defending workers’ rights and help to expose the inhumane factory conditions which thrive under the grip of China’s Stalinist rulers.

We should fight, internationally, for a rational and democratic way of organising society, in which humanity’s latent creativity is liberated from the shackles of wage-slavery and “in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”

In this struggle I may even use my iPhone, for as Lenin remarked: “The capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them.”

Liam McNulty, Cambridge

Back the Danish government?

Bjarke Friborg reported (*Solidarity 220*) that Denmark’s Red Green Alliance (RGA), after doing well in the 15 September parliamentary elections with 7% of the vote, is supporting the new government led by the Social Democratic Party (equivalent of the Labour Party in Britain).

Two arguments could be made for supporting the government. Without RGA support, the government alliance would have only 80 votes in parliament, while the “Blue Alliance” round the conservative Venstre party, which led the outgoing government, has 87.

And the Danish Social Democrats, unlike similar parties elsewhere in Europe, say they will respond to the economic crisis with a “stimulus package” of increased public spending, especially on education and infrastructure.

However, as Bjarke notes, the new government will be “firmly within the shackles of the capitalist system”. Even its promised reforms are modest. Should revolutionary socialists really support such a government, as distinct from supporting some of its measures?

The RGA “congratulates” the new government and is “willing to compromise and to reach agreements”. “We will fight from negotiation to negotiation to pull the new government in a more inclusive direction”.

The Social Democrats’ leading coalition partner, the Social Liberals (roughly similar to the Liberal Democrats in Britain), will surely also fight to “pull” the government in their direction, and from a stronger position.

There can be no objection to RGA members of parliament supporting beneficial measures of a Social-Democrat-led minority government. But a stance of general support, or a dogma that saving the government comes above policy issues, is bound to shackle the RGA to the government, as the government in turn is “shackled” to capitalist interests.

Support for extra-parliamentary movements does not resolve that problem. When the French Communist Party was in coalition governments with the Socialist Party in 1981-4 and 1997-2002, it said it would combine two levels of activity, one seeking the best deal within the government, and the other mobilising on the streets. This included the CP supporting protests against policies pushed through by CP ministers, with the devious explanation that the CP ministers were doing the best they could on their level, and the CP rank and file must do the best it could on its level.

The result was an effectively neo-liberal government, a discrediting of left-wing ideas, and a demobilisation of the working class.

Martin Thomas, Islington

Occupy, organise... fight for a workers' government

In Greece this spring, workers and students occupied Syntagma square in Athens and the space at the White Tower in Thessaloniki.

They were drawing inspiration from the Tahrir Square mobilisation in Egypt. Now their example, and Egypt's, has spread worldwide, first with the "Occupy Wall Street" movement in the USA, and then on Saturday 15 October with similar demonstrations and occupations across the world.

As we go to press on 18 October, hundreds of people are camping outside St Paul's Cathedral, in London, seeking to establish a rallying-point for a democratic solution to the economic crisis.

In Greece, socialists — in particular, activists from a group called OKDE, with whom we from *Solidarity* and Workers' Liberty have discussed and cooperated — went to the occupations of the city squares and discussed ways that the occupiers could make their movement to help the workers' movement win the battle for a democratic alternative to the capitalist cuts.

The socialists argued against the use of divisive symbols like the Greek flag and nationalist slogans, which were prominent in Greece as they are not, for example, at St Paul's.

They argued for attention to be paid to the struggles of migrant workers.

They suggested slogans like the expropriation of the banks and the placing of the whole financial system under democratic control. They argued tweaking-around-the-edges like the Robin Hood (or Tobin) tax would not work.

GO OUT

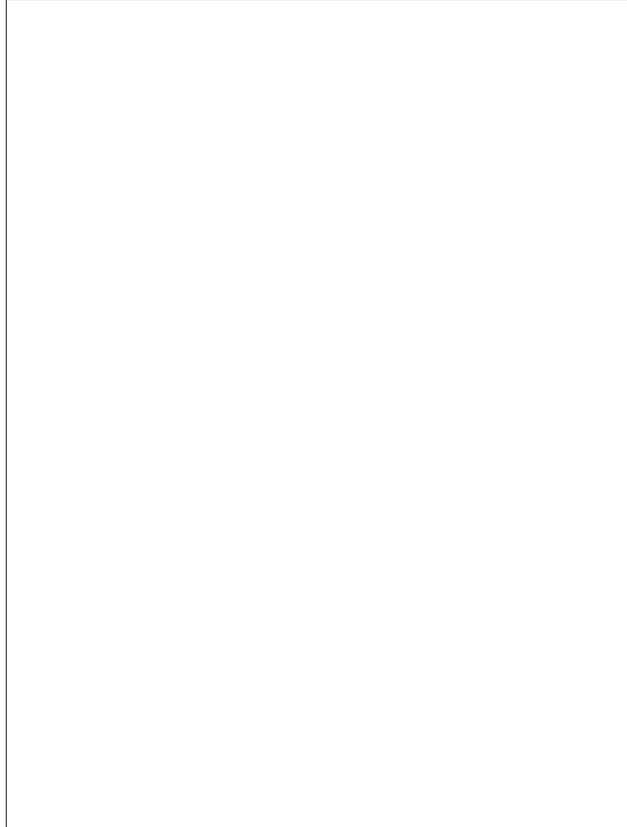
They organised working groups to go out to campaigns in working-class communities and in workplaces, to offer help and make links.

Occupiers at White Tower square in Thessaloniki went to help restaurant workers who were occupying a local Applebees' restaurant, and received aid from local trade unions.

The socialists argued that the occupations should put pressure on the trade union leaderships to call for action. In that way they helped along a proliferation of organisation which is now bearing fruit with waves of civil disobedience and industrial action in Greek workplaces.

Actions, slogans and strategies like that — clear demands for the conquest of the economy, and turning-out to the organised working class — can allow the "Occupy" movement to shake capitalist society and feed new life into the 200-year fight for socialism, as the socialist movement renews itself after decades of Stalinist falsification and capitalist triumphalism.

The November 2010 edition of the *Financial Times* magazine, helpfully devoted to the theme "How to spend it", contains adverts for watches (commercially-produced items, not one-off antiques) costing £1.4 million, and, to complement them, watch-winding machines at prices vary-



ing from £150,000 to £2,000.

A few months later, Save the Children released a report which revealed that one in four children in Manchester and Tower Hamlets live below the poverty line.

In February this year, 200 executives of the publicly-owned Royal Bank of Scotland received bonuses of £1 million each.

In the first three months of 2011, 16,025 homes were repossessed in the UK.

The current crisis of capitalism, and the drive by the capitalists to shift the cost of the crisis onto the backs of working class people, has created obscene inequalities. Contrasts where some wonder whether to spend £1,400,000 or only a few hundred thousand pounds on a watch, and others wonder how to survive. Inequalities that defy belief.

The economic plundering, political corruption, hypocrisy and straightforward lying that constitute capitalist "business as usual" have been sharpened to extremes.

The "Occupy" protests which took place on 15 October and following days right across the globe — from Dublin to Santiago, Zagreb to Madrid and London — are a howl of protest against these obscenities.

Many hundreds of thousands of people, activists young

and old, and those not previously involved in politics, have come to protest and camp out in the streets. They have the sympathy of many millions more.

The sight of thousands of ordinary people making sacrifices, putting themselves in danger, fighting the police for a more just, less unequal world, building infrastructures of a movement through self-organisation, fellow-feeling, generosity and solidarity — all of this offers a glimpse of the possibility of a new, better society.

The boldness and honesty of the occupiers stands in contrast to the pathetic, craven crawling of the leaders of the "official left" who still scrape and bow to the capitalists, and to the timidity of the likes of Ed Balls who can think of no better slogan than "yes, cuts, but slower cuts!"

How can this movement avoid petering out as the wave of protests at IMF, World Bank, World Economic Forum, and G8 meetings after Seattle in 1999 eventually petered out? How can the anger and creativity of the protesters and their sympathisers become a force that shakes governments and the capitalist system?

WHOLE

The logic of the protest is to demand an end to all class inequality. It is to work to reorganise not just the banking sector but society as a whole.

What holds us humanity captive is not a conspiracy of bad financiers, but a whole system of economic exploitation and political subjugation. All of society needs to be reorganised from top to bottom, and put under the democratic control of the majority, the 99% as the protestors put it.

The banks should be taken under public ownership and run democratically as a single public banking, pensions and mortgage service. The vast wealth of the banks should be seized and used to transform our lives: to provide a dignified retirement, free education, housing, the best quality of healthcare for all, free public transport and a system of renewable energy.

To achieve that, we need to fight for a government which can push through such a transformation — a workers' government, whose elected representatives are controlled from below and subject to recall by democratic assemblies and workers' organisations.

The rule of profit in workplaces can only be smashed, and replaced by economic democracy by the people who work in those workplaces uniting against their bosses and pressing their claims — to reorganise work, to run the industry in a more humane and socially useful way, to claim a share of the profits that allows them to live with dignity.

This has to be achieved in the workplaces. It cannot be done from a city square alone.

The occupations can serve as a beacon. Their daring and radicalism can be an inspiration to the workers' movement. They can help blast away the cobwebs of decades of conservative mis-leadership and the memory of years of defeat.

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The global fightback a

On Saturday 15 October, nearly 1,000 cities across 82 countries saw protests against austerity, corporate power and financial-sector greed.

Some protests numbered only in the hundreds; others mobilised hundreds of thousands. 500,000 marched in Madrid,

300,000 in Rome and 100,000 in Santiago, Chile.

The movement represents something new. Mobilising layers well beyond already-existing activists, the movement is the first explicit, global, “on-the-streets” expression of the enormous anger at the way in which world

capitalism is forcing ordinary people to pay for a crisis created by its own recklessness.

The Alliance for Workers’ Liberty actively supports the protests, and will work within the new movements to argue for working-class socialism.

The emergence of a mass movement

By Dan La Botz

A handful of young people started Occupy Wall Street in mid-September, as a protest against the banks and corporations that have grown rich while most Americans have grown poorer.

Within weeks they had attracted hundreds and then thousands to marches and demonstration in New York City - one of them leading to the arrest of hundreds on the Brooklyn Bridge. The movement’s chant “We are the 99%” rang out not only in the Wall Street canyon but also across the country.” Now there are scores of Occupy groups across the United States camping out in public places, marching and rallying in cities and towns against corporate greed.

Occupy Wall Street and its offspring, nearly all of which began with white youth, have grown not only larger, but more diverse, attracting people from all walks of life and every segment of the society. They are making real their chant, “This is what democracy looks like.” While some of the young people have been inspired by the occupation of Tahrir Square and by the indignados of Spain, this is an essentially American movement about American issues. The Occupy folks are furious at the corporations and many are angry at government as well, they are generally hostile to the Republicans and disappointed in the Democrats. Frustrated with the economic and political situation, they want to tax the rich, they want to stop the foreclosures, they want jobs for themselves and all the other unemployed. Many demand an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

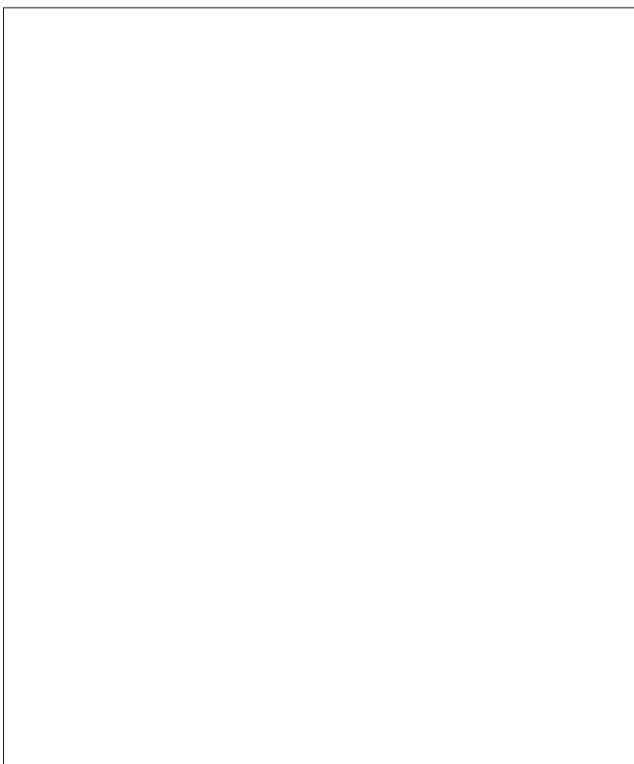
AN IMPRESSIVE ORGANIZATION

While most of those down at Zuccotti Park where the occupation is taking place are from New York, others have come in ones and two from around the country to take a stand against corporate greed.

Visitors are impressed with the organization: the kitchen, the medical center, the media center, the daily lectures with intellectual luminaries such as Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank; Jeffrey Sachs, Harvard Professor and special advisor to the United Nations’ secretary general; and Barbara Ehrenreich, feminist and author. There is now also a newspaper, *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, which plans to go national soon. Tens of thousands of dollars have been raised through small contributions by both Occupy Wall Street and the newspaper.

The peaceful movement has had clashes with the police both in New York City and in other cities and towns, but it has forged ahead. There have been dozens of arrests not only in New York City but also in Boston, Seattle, Des Moines, and yet this has not deterred the growing movement. The weekend of October 8-9 saw a huge demonstration of 10,000 in Portland and good size protest of 750 in Cincinnati.

While, as usual, things may be larger, faster moving, and more radical on the coasts, the movement has also touched the “fly over” country of the Midwest. In Chicago previously planned protests by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), other unions and community groups brought out thousands in demonstrations against financial institutions that ended up merging with Occupy Chicago, a development that could either strengthen or swamp the Occupy movement there.



UTOPIAN AND INSPIRING

Occupy is in part a coming together of activists. Watching any of the demonstrations in any city on any day one sees pass by on the t-shirts and jackets all the logos of every movement that has touched the country in the last decade: anti-war, LGBTQ, foreclosures, and civil rights activists.

Walking among them are others new to the movement, blue collar and white collar workers, so far without their logos, slogans, and banners, carrying their hand painted signs with slogans like “Create Jobs, Reform Wall Street, Tax the Wealthy More,” and “The People are Too Big to Fail” (a reference to the argument that the U.S. government had to save the banks because they were “too big to fail”). The sense of hope that the movement is creating was expressed by one sign down at Wall Street that read, “This is the First Time I’ve Felt Hopeful in a Very Long Time.”

The movement has a utopian character. Many of those involved in it want not only to overcome the immediate effects of the economic crisis — they want a better life, a better country, a better world. The movement as such has no ideology. This is populism of a left wing sort: the people versus big business and bad government. Though there are anarchists in it and they have given it some of their style, it is not an anarchist movement.

Though there are some socialists in it, the movement is by no means socialist. What is perhaps best and most exciting about the movement is the confluence of the many social movements with middle class and working class people who have come down to Wall Street or in some other town or city down to Main Street to say, “We’ve had it.” The utopianism of the movement has inspired ordinary people to say, “We can live differently, we must, and we will.”

A month or so into the Occupy movement, the labour unions began to take an interest. In New York the unions

turned out thousands of their members for a major march in October. At about the same time, Richard Trumka, head of the AFL-CIO, spoke out in favour of the movement, as did leaders of various national and local unions.

Yet the AFL-CIO and the Occupy movement remain wary of each other. The AFL’s principal goal in the next year is to help Obama and the Democrats win the November 2012 elections, and both the AFL and the Democrats would love to figure out how to harness Occupy for their political goals. Many in the Occupy movement would love to have more workers involved, the unions involved, but they fear the labour bureaucracy’s heavy hand. And, more important for some, they fear losing their political independence to union officials and Democrats.

OCCUPY WALL STREET AND POLITICS

The Republican Party, of course, loathes the politics of Occupy. House Majority leader Eric Cantor referred to the Occupiers as “mobs.”

Alluding to President Barack Obama he said, “Some in this town condone “pitting Americans against Americans.” Mitt Romney, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination said, “I think it’s dangerous, this class warfare.” Whatever they may say to the media, the Republicans’ real fear is that Occupy Wall Street could buoy up the Democrats, while their hope that the movement’s radicalism will blow their opponents to the left, costing them votes in the center.

The Democratic Party Congressional Campaign Committee and the think-tank Center for American Program would like to bind the Democratic ties to Occupy Wall Street, believing that the movement could put wind in the party’s sails for the 2012. Other party leaders fear that the identification with the movement would move the party toward the left and away from the centre where they believe the voters are. Even more important, some Democratic Party leaders argue, supporting a group that is attacking Wall Street could result in fewer donations from the banks and corporations that fund the Democrats.

Bernie Sanders, the only independent in the Senate who calls himself a socialist (though he caucuses with the Democrats) spoke to the Occupy movement with an op-ed piece calling upon the government to break up the banks, support small business, and stop speculation in the oil industry. That was the Progressive Party program of 1912, the traditional program of American populism, but it misses completely the radical spirit of this movement.

Some Democrats would like to see Occupy Wall Street become their Tea Party, the rightwing group that brought new vitality to the Republicans. But Occupy Wall Street activists have kept their distance from the Democrats, refusing to provide them a platform for their candidates. For example, when Representative John Lewis, a legend of the civil rights movement and liberal African American Congressman from Georgia, appeared at an Occupy Atlanta, he was not permitted to speak. Apparently, so far, the movement is committed to defending its independence.

Many of us are working to nurture this movement, to build it, and to help its potentially radical implications emerge.

• This article was written for the bimonthly Swiss socialist newspaper *SolidaritéS* (n°196)

Against austerity

Occupy London begins

By Ed Maltby

An “Occupy London” camp has been established in front of St. Paul’s Cathedral after over 3,000 protestors gathered on Saturday 15 October as part of the global “Occupy” day of action.

The original intention had been to occupy Paternoster Square, but that was blocked off by police. The crowd, after some to-ing and fro-ing went to the space in front of the Cathedral to discuss what to do. While the police formed lines over the road, stopping traffic, controlling access to the square, and blocking a lot of extra people who wanted to join the crowd outside St Paul’s, and a section of the protest had a face-off with them, some of the protestors took part in an assembly on the steps (others, it must be said, couldn’t hear the speeches).

The politics of the rally were varied. The crowd was largely young, people in their twenties, with a fair-sized minority of left political activists of different sorts.

Home-made placards offered a wide variety of views. Slogans like “we are the 99%” dominated, as did a vague sense that the system had let people down, gambled with their money, and so on. Speakers gave vague criticisms of capitalist excess, and especially of the banks — one speaker said that the problem boiled down to the world’s central banks and if they were got rid of the problem would disappear.

The global movement of occupations is a show of anger at what the capitalist classes of the world are doing, and it is a search for answers and means of fighting back. There is a

London occupiers speak out

St. Paul’s occupiers spoke to Sacha Ismail of *Solidarity*

John is an unemployed activist:

“The occupation is very good, though we were starting with a blank sheet of paper.

“It’s taken us time to get organised. And it took lots of discussion, through quite an arduous process, to produce our statement of demands. Those demands aren’t set in stone, but they reflect where the majority of the camp’s thinking.

“We want an end to the current economic system, which makes the rich richer at the expense of the poor. We do not want to pay for the current crisis — we think the cuts are neither necessary nor inevitable.

“We want the money wasted on wars to be spent on saving lives instead.”

Two students, a woman aged 19 and a man aged 21:

“We’re just visiting for the day; we wanted to see what’s going on. We’ve been on other protests before, the student protest, the anti-EDL action in Tower Hamlets and so on.

“This is exciting because nothing like it has been done before.

“Perhaps the solution is more regulation of capitalism, less spending on wars, curbs on the banks. The system as it’s currently set up doesn’t work for people. A better model is countries like Denmark, which is more social democratic, neither capitalist nor socialist.

“We should definitely support the 30 November strike. The tradition of joining unions is weaker among young people, but it’s getting stronger because of what the Tories are doing.”

Two young women who were putting up an awning. One described herself as a “student activist” and one as a “local campaigner”

“We hope to become a tight-knit community so we can continue the occupation as long as necessary to achieve change.

“The movement is very much an umbrella. We want wealth distributed equally. We want minorities to have more say. We

need for this movement to link up with the global labour movement, and develop clearer ideas about how to put the economic resources of the world under the democratic control of the majority; and there is a need to move on from simplistic banker-conspiracy ideas. The movement needs support to work through these ideas and discussions.

Whether the occupations in the UK will reach a critical mass and be able to hang on, or whether they will disappear today but come back later in another form, or how they will develop — these things remain to be seen, and will be decided by actions in the days and weeks ahead.

• Longer report at bit.ly/prPDIg. For the statement adopted outside St Paul’s on 16 October, www.occupylondon.org.uk. For updates, see: twitter.com/OccupyLSX

don’t want a class system, a system based on how much you earn. We want the gap between rich and poor to close. We want a linear hierarchy, not a pyramid.

“We want free education. All the politicians had free education, a free NHS and everything but now it’s all been corporatised and privatised.

“People can join our occupation here, or occupy where they are. You can use social media to generate an occupation movement. Online activism is very important. The movement is catching on and spreading, like in the riots.

“We don’t like labels like anarchist or socialist, or even anti-capitalist. We don’t need to describe this movement except as ‘our community’.

“This society insists that we’re divided into classes, that we have labels stuck on us, but we want to get away from all that.”

“An electric atmosphere”

D is an AWL member and RMT activist who works at St. Paul’s station

Saturday 15 October started off with an electric atmosphere, with many desperate to occupy the Stock Exchange in Paternoster Square.

But with heavy police lines and an injunction out to prevent people passing through this area, protesters resorted to occupying the area around St. Paul’s Cathedral, about 100 metres from the Stock Exchange itself.

Tents were soon erected, and the atmosphere changed to become calmer and more relaxed. Music played loudly, people chanted and participated in discussions and mini educational sessions. Banners and streamers along with many placards dominated the area.

After several days, the area has become much more organised, with spaces set up for First Aid and a kitchen area to accommodate all those supporting the cause. Donations continue to flood in, with food, drink, blankets and money, and hundreds attending each night to ensure this area remains occupied.

A few RMT members have made an appearance to show solidarity, and no doubt other trade union members too, but unfortunately there is little visible presence from the trade union movement.

It would be good to see protests like this keep going, and hopefully to spread.

Italy’s indignados confront the state

By Hugh Edwards

On Saturday 15 October, around 200,000 converged in Rome to march and rally and once more underline a burning hatred for the putridly corrupt regime of Silvio Berlusconi and an equally burning determination to found the means to get rid of it.

But this time these sentiments embodied something vitally different in Italy’s notoriously fragmented and divided radical terrain.

For the first time almost every element of radical protest and action — from the metalworkers of FIOM, the “base unions” [rank-and-file networks] of COBAS, university researchers and students unions, social centres from every major city, left political parties and movements to a constellation of environmentalist collectives, citizen action and anti-privatisation forums, single-issue campaigners, internet activists — had found a common front! Whatever its shortcomings, it was another step towards a growing political realism from which the key tasks and priorities of how to build a serious worker-led movement of united resistance can be posed.

And the need for that realism was dramatically in evidence. As at Genoa a decade ago, 500 or so of the “Black Bloc”, masked and kitted out in riot gear, launched themselves against any targets considered symbols of capitalist power and wealth, setting fire to cars, rubbish carts, and shops, smashing bank (and post office!) dispensing tills, and simultaneously setting violently on any other marcher protesting that this gratuitous vandalism played into the hands of those in power.

The police, seeing their opportunity, sent in their water cannons and teargas squads. Then the whole character of the day changed, as the authorities split the marchers, intending to mop up those of the Bloc who had come for nothing more than a riot. But the cops underestimated the incredible fighting capacity of the Social Centre militants in Rome and elsewhere, joining the Bloc in what became a five-hour battle, which finally saw the state thugs driven back street by street and, irony of ironies, out of Piazza San Giovanni, the intended point of arrival of the march!

The picture is mixed. All the forces of the Italian political establishment have been handed a gift. As to the organisation of the event, the very presence of the Black Bloc — the dead spot on the the collective brain of the radical left — points to the prevailing “anti-politics”, so powerfully negative when “democracy” is construed to permit the participation of those so violently opposed to it in words and deeds and so cynically apolitical in the destruction wreaked.

In spite of all of their bureaucratic deformities, none of the present union federations would have permitted the Black Bloc to do what they did. Regrettably the Bloc will feel emboldened by what its activists believe to be a famous victory over the state machine. In reality that is a predictably subpolitical refusal to distinguish the woods from the trees. At best the victory is pyrrhic. There can be no short cuts for the masses but to find, identify and shape to their own needs the political and organisational tools necessary to confront exploitation and oppression.

That process, haltingly, confusedly has been underway for some time with positive results. The demonstration’s turnout, at least, was another sign of it. It will not be stopped.

A love letter to a fantasy city

Daniel Randall reviews Woody Allen's latest film, *Midnight in Paris*

After London and Barcelona, Paris has become the latest city (outside of his native New York) to get the Woody Allen treatment.

Although he has visited the French capital before (in 1996's *Everyone Says I Love You*, for example), his latest work, *Midnight in Paris*, gives it a proper going over. You can always tell when Allen really wants to get stuck into a city if he puts its name in the movie's title — think *Manhattan* or, more recently, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*.

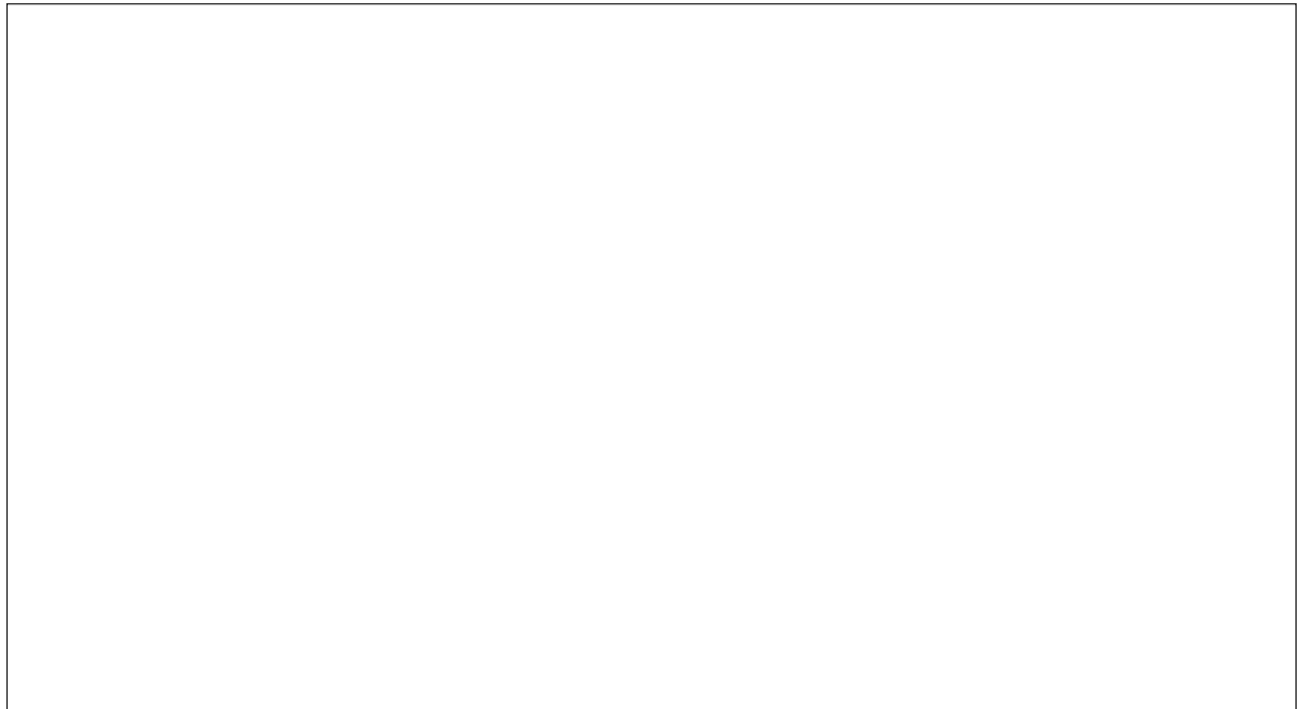
The film's opening montage is a litany of the most clichéd shots of Paris imaginable — the Eiffel Tower, the Champs Elysées, the Jardin des Tuileries. It doesn't bode well; similar cinematography was employed in Allen's three London films (big red buses, various bridges, Big Ben) and they were mostly damp squibs which failed to sink roots in their settings in the way his New York oeuvre has.

But as the Paris movie clichés pile up (the opening cliché-fest runs to nearly five minutes before we get a word of dialogue or meet any of the film's characters), you begin to realise that we're actually in on a joke. This isn't a movie about Paris; it's a movie about the *idea* of Paris, and particularly its place in the cultural consciousness of the middle-class liberal intellectual milieu of whom, and to whom, Allen is still ultimately speaking.

The plot, more fantastical than any of Allen's work for some time, focuses on Owen Wilson's Gil (the Allen figure, thankfully no longer played by Allen himself), a screenwriter in love with Paris's bohemian artistic past who finds himself transported back in time to 1920s Paris where he consorts with the likes of Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Allen, through Gil, explores what it is about Paris that cast such a spell over the consciousness of many of the artists he (Allen) admires.

There are no definitive answers, and the film's entire conceit is Allen placing a big question mark over whether the Paris of Stein and Fitzgerald, or of the Belle Epoque (also visited) was ever real or simply woven into artistic mythology by chroniclers like Allen himself.

Early on, Rachel McAdams' Inez tells Gil that he's "in love with a fantasy" of Paris. That is what Allen's films



Scene from Woody Allen's "Midnight in Paris"

have always been in their relations to the cities in which they take place — love letters to fantasy cities that cannot really exist. When Gil visits Toulouse-Lautrec, even he and his contemporaries yearn for a previous golden age. The entire film is redolent of the opening narration from *Manhattan*: "Chapter One. He adored New York City. He idolised it all out of proportion — er, no, make that: he — he romanticised it all out of proportion."

A rigorous political interrogation of the film would, of course, throw up problems; like his other cities, Allen's Paris is almost exclusively white and very middle-class. While long-dead expat residents are allowed to reclaim the city in Gil's imagination, Paris's contemporary black working-class inhabitants are never encountered. But Allen is filming what he knows, and the American-Jewish intellec-

tual who has spent years documenting his love-hate fixation with his own middle-class milieu is hardly well-equipped to remake *La Haine*. (Although Peter Bradshaw's tongue-in-cheek suggestion in his *Guardian* review of the film that someone overlays *La Haine*'s grim shots of working-class Parisian housing projects with Allen's sumptuous clarinet-jazz score is one I find extremely appealing.)

Few artists in western cinema paint the idealised, romanticised, fantasy city-space — urbane, sophisticated spaces of liberated and liberating explosions of radical culture and human relations — quite like Woody Allen, and while he will never capture anywhere as magically as New York, his Paris is at least as good as his Barcelona and distinctly better than his London. It is a fantasy city that deserves tourists.

Lap dancing and moralism

By Jean Lane

A public meeting was hosted in Tower Hamlets, east London, on 11 October by CAPE — the Campaign Against People Exploitation. It was billed as a balanced debate about whether Tower Hamlets council should have a policy of "nil sex establishments" in the Borough. It was nothing of the sort.

I went to the meeting having not entirely worked out what I think about lap dancing clubs. I am sympathetic to the concerns of local residents about noise and anti-social behaviour in and around their estates, and the idea of women having a job for which the sole function is the sexual arousal or gratification of men makes me feel uncomfortable.

At the same time, however, I live in Whitechapel. Street prostitution has been a reality here for many decades. The lives of the women on the street are brutal. The problem is not caused by lap dancing clubs, relatively new to the area. Does the existence of sex clubs represent a driving of more women into sexual exploitation? Or does it provide a haven where women can at least organise and acquire some safety in their lives? I was looking forward to hearing both sides of the debate.

The arguments in favour of a total ban ranged from "lap dancing does not enhance the power of women" as stated by Bea Campbell journalist and 1970s Stalinist, to "it's disgusting!" from Ruhan Ali of TELCO (The East London Communities Organisation, often mistakenly but understandably called The East London Churches Organisation).

However much the supposedly intellectual speakers attempted to use the language of "empowerment" and "emancipation" of women, it all boiled down to this: lap dancing clubs cause an increase in rape statistics, drug taking, alcoholism, debt, prostitution, the breakdown of the family, the sexual exploitation of children, the loosening of the moral fibre of our menfolk and the loss of dignity of our women. All of which rather begs the question; would all

these ills disappear if lap dance clubs were closed down?

One speaker, Dilwara Begum, billed as "a writer", spoke vehemently about the evils of lust, proclaimed that "the boys and girls of England are not for sale!" and begged us to look to China where all such clubs are banned! Are women not prostituted in China then? Is the moral fortitude of Chinese men intact? Another, Safia Jama, of the Somali Integration Team, demanded to know, "how can we allow women to take off their clothes?"

The heavy moralism towards the end of the long list of platform speakers was overwhelming. Respect, the organisers of CAPE: "we do not want these clubs next to our schools and places of worship". The Labour Party: "lap dancing causes the sexual exploitation of children". The SWP: "what kind of world do we live in?" (going on to bemoan the fact that human sexuality is distorted and unfree).

That is true. I suspect, however, that the desire to close down lap dancing clubs has more to do with the SWP speaker's desire to be part of a campaign than to unshackle the chains from around the sexual desires of the working classes. Still, at least she did not mention "the war".

CLEAR

What was very clear was that most of the speakers in the room were actually against sex, and in particular, sex initiated by women. I had mistakenly wandered into an 1830 meeting of the British Temperance Society.

There were two interventions from the other side. Kirsten Neil, former stripper of the Nags Head, considered herself a performer, well paid and better treated than when she worked as a PA in the city. "If anyone treated me badly I could call security and get them thrown out. I wish I could have done that in my office job".

A male sex worker and GMB organiser attempted to speak out about the need to unionise sex workers rather than criminalise them, but was closed down by the chair, Cllr Rania Khan (Independent, ex-Respect) insisting that he ask a question, though no-one else did. Only one speaker

from the floor raised the problem of giving governments, local or otherwise, the power to ban things.

I came away from the meeting knowing very well that I was not with the moralists. But I was not entirely happy with the other side either. I cannot believe that all women sex workers are well paid, secure and happy in their work, or that trafficking and coercion do not go on. I also do not go along with the idea that women are raped in supermarket car parks and women are exploited in the office, so what's the difference?

For sure if Tower Hamlets council are concerned about the sexual exploitation of women they would do better to tackle domestic violence. But they can do that and tackle the clubs.

The question is how? Drive them underground and push more women onto the streets of Whitechapel? Or control them through licensing and get the unions in to organise the workers?

The consultation is going on in Tower Hamlets not long after attempts by a radical minority within the Muslim community to ban the Gay Pride march and to prevent sex education in local schools. Respect and the SWP have nothing to say about that, but champion the shutting down of sex clubs in a way that locks them in with these ultra-right wing elements.

The church, the mosque, the independents, the Labour Party, Respect and the SWP all pronounced themselves on the side of the ban in the interests of either family values or women's rights.

The council, the great defender of women's rights, as shown by the cuts they have made in children's services, Sure Start, social services and youth clubs, will be given a mandate to shut them down. Domestic violence, street prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse will continue to rise as the cuts take away people's lifelines.

And lap dancing clubs will move to the next Borough over. But we don't care about them, do we?

Housing benefit cuts sharpen

By Patrick McCabe

The Tories' planned cuts in housing benefit will cause hardship for hundreds of thousands of working-class families. Many will be left homeless and destitute.

Before April this year, housing benefit awards were based on the cheapest half of private rents in any given area. Under new rules they will be based on the cheapest third of rents. But even if people rent in the cheapest end of the market, benefit will still be cut if the rent is above a set limit for the property size. Initially this will affect families needing larger homes, but eventually, as capped amounts are unlikely to be able to keep pace with rent rises, this will affect everyone.

According to the National Housing Federation 48% of people receiving benefit for private sector accommodation already face shortfalls between their benefit and their rent, with the average shortfall being £23 per week. Now their benefit rates will be subject to caps ranging from £250 per week for a one-bedroom property to £400 per week for a four-bedroom property. And four bedrooms will now be the maximum entitlement. These changes have already hit people moving into homes after April 2011, and will affect existing tenants in the New Year.

A private tenant in south west London killed himself when he received notice from Wandsworth council that his housing benefit would be cut by £30 a month. The man, who was 44, lived with his wife and their nine-year-old son.

These cuts are not being made because benefit payments are "getting out of hand". The average housing benefit award in the private sector is just £109.25 per week (and £72.60 for social housing tenants).

Private sector landlords pushing up rents, in the context

of acute housing shortages, has resulted in a sharp rise in costs.

According to the National Housing Federation (NHF), around 1.5 million people in England are on waiting lists for social housing; the £4.5 billion currently being invested by the government in housing in fact amounts to a 63% cut. Consequently rents in the private sector are set to jump by 20% in the next 10 years.

Landlords have already begun to anticipate changes by serving eviction notices and refusing to accommodate those claiming housing benefit.

Being homeless will no longer entitle you to help. Under the Localism Bill, local authorities will no longer be compelled to indefinitely house families in bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation. After a year, even this meagre safety net will be removed.

EVICITION

Landlords indicated that they would be unwilling to lower rents to cover the new thresholds.

Although some councils have indicated that they would negotiate with private landlords to bring costs down, and whilst housing organisations have stipulated that councils should use their reserve funds to make up for the shortfall, we cannot rely on any such benevolence. These are the same councillors who were so willing to implement cuts budgets across the capital.

When hired goons serve eviction notices to families and drag them from their homes, or when children who have grown up in communities are forced to move to glorified shacks hundreds of miles away, will campaigners and activists continue with their laudable but ultimately useless approach of letter writing and lobbying?

Writing in 1847 on a housing crisis facing German workers, Friedrich Engels said: "In order to make an end of this housing shortage there is only one means: to abolish altogether the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the ruling class."

Socialist activists urgently need to work out the steps needed to mount a defence against government attacks on housing.

The basic demand for adequate shelter and accommodation does not seem particularly revolutionary, but against the backdrop of these fierce attacks they take on a new meaning. Against the interests of the ruling class we assert working-class interests. Through our collective action we assert the right to a dignified existence: no evictions, no to bailiffs terrorising our neighbourhoods and communities.

We need to campaign for councils to introduce mandatory purchase schemes when landlords insist on keeping their rents artificially high. We call for rent controls in the private housing sector, along with the complete reversal of these attacks on housing benefit.

We should call for an extensive and far reaching social housing building programme, based on need and put under the control of tenants' associations.

We need to physically confront the bailiffs and hired thugs. Local housing action committees could be set up to draw in private residents who would usually be cut off from community organisations. Such committees could make co-ordinated occupations of the houses of families and workers facing eviction.

Demonstrations will need to be initiated in beleaguered communities, in order to stand up to the landlords' enforcers.

Tories move to criminalise squatting

By Dan Rawnsley

In June this year the Communities and Local Government Department reported that 44,160 households were accepted as homeless last year — a rise of 10% on the previous year. In the meantime the Empty Homes Agency estimates that between 500,000 and 725,000 buildings are empty in the UK, enough to house around 1.8 million people.

Rather creating secure, good quality and affordable housing, the government is criminalising squatting. A government consultation has outlined plans that "could make squatting a criminal offence for the first time and abolish so-called 'squatters' rights' which currently prevent rightful commercial property owners from using force to break back in."

Squatters for Secure Housing (SQUASH) was set up in the 1990s in opposition to Tory attempts to criminalise squatting and has been formed again in response to these proposals. Reuben Taylor from SQUASH told me that the campaign's "objective is to prevent the criminalisation of squatting [which is a] criminalisation of homeless people... Over the coming months, with cuts to housing benefits and job losses, we'll see more and more people without secure housing... To criminalise the victims of the housing crisis is inappropriate."

The campaign also seeks to address some of the myths around squatting. Reports, notably in the *Evening Standard*, that push for the criminalisation of squatting, point to examples of people who have been shut out of their homes by squatters. Reuben informed me that "[t]he current fear is that you go out for a pint of milk and squatters move in. The law fully protects home owners. It's a criminal offence to squat the house that someone lives in. These stories are misrepresentations."

As an article on the SQUASH website points out the change in law "is about the squatting of... unoccupied [property] or without an intended occupier. The proposal isn't even about 'squatting' per se. The proposal is nothing less than to criminalise trespass."

Reuben and SQUASH argue that the changes could also impact badly on vulnerable tenants. "Some forms of [the government] proposals will impact on tenancy rights... [I]f a landlord wants to get rid of a 'problematic' tenant and they go to the police and say this tenant is a squatter; the police have to make a decision on the doorstep about whether the person in the building is a squatter or a tenant."

Squatting can have a political agenda

The police force, an organisation which first and foremost protects private property, is unlikely to take the side of so-called "problematic" tenants.

The criminalisation of trespass will affect workplace and university occupations, an invaluable tactic for organised protest and opposition to the right of owners, managers and bosses to do whatever they want. Occupiers could be evicted forcibly by the police immediately after they refuse to leave an occupation.

The Tories have paid lip service to the idea that the right to protest should be maintained, suggesting that there could be a clause in any new law to provide for protests but this falls down on two counts. As Reuben says "lots of squatters consider what they do to be a form of protest, so what do we do? Only the political squatters can squat and people who squat because they're homeless are criminal? It'll be hard to see how they frame these proposals in a way that doesn't impact on occupations."

We have already seen the government defending the police force's right to charge school children with horses and batons and making veiled threats to strengthen the anti-union laws. This is not a government which is concerned with defending our right to protest.

An article on the SQUASH website accepts that "the scale of [the housing crisis] is enormous and we do not suggest that squatting can somehow resolve these problems", further arguing that "the idea of criminalising the people trying to cope with these top-down changes in access to housing, is grossly unfair and will undoubtedly further exacerbate problems of homelessness."

However, another article contradictorily argues that "squatting is more than just a critique of inadequate housing; indeed, if the aims of the movement were simply in better housing provision it would be much more susceptible to state tactics of integration and co-option. The problem for the government is that squatting is more radical than this: inherent in its actual practice is the contesting of private property rights."

True, squatting, just like any other occupation, calls in to immediate question the rights of an individual capitalist to do what they want with their property. However, on its own squatting cannot be an effective political challenge on the issue of housing.

The rationale is that by posing an alternative housing strategy squatting can set an example for others to follow. However, when squatting people are often forced into sub-standard housing, variously without water (heated or otherwise), electricity or gas and without long-term stability. This cannot be the level of housing that we stand for.

The only solution is good quality affordable housing for all, and the construction of new and renovated publicly-owned housing.

When I asked Reuben about demands for good quality housing for all she argued that "of course part of our campaign is that there is a complete lack of affordable housing... At the same time we don't believe this government or any government will be able to provide this social housing." This refusal to place demands on the state for more social housing doesn't sit logically alongside the demand placed on the state not to criminalise squatting.

We need a labour movement campaign for adequate social housing. The trade union leaders must be forced to use their votes and their strength in the Labour Party to push forward a whole raft of proposals including on housing. Such a campaign and such a Labour Party is not likely to spring up any time soon, but if the only way to deal with the housing crisis is to build more social housing then this is a demand that cannot be avoided.

Reservations aside, socialists and trade unionists should SQUASH's campaign. Eviction resistances and squats should be supported in our communities.

We must make the case for defending tenants in rent arrears, fighting for affordable housing as a basic right and ultimately for the abolition of the whole rent and property system.

• More: www.squashcampaign.org and @squash_campaign on Twitter

Their globalisation and ours

By Martin Thomas

In many ways capital has been global since the 16th century. Four developments are relatively new since the 1980s.

The first is that we have a world made up almost entirely of capitalist states integrated into the world market. In the whole of the previous history of capitalism there have been many countries which have been dominated by pre-capitalist ruling classes and pre-capitalist modes of production, and tied into the capitalist world market in very limited and specialised ways. For much of the 20th century there was the Stalinist bloc. But now, in almost all countries, there are true-blue capitalist states well integrated into the world market.

Secondly, almost all countries are integrated into the world market in complex ways. They include substantial sectors integrated into complex production networks stretching over several countries.

For a large part of the history of capitalism, the pattern of world trade was one of raw materials being exported from less capitalistically developed countries to the metropolis in Western Europe or the USA, most of manufacturing industry being based in the metropolis, and manufactured goods being exported back to the less capitalistically developed countries.

That pattern has pretty much broken down. Manufactured goods predominate in world trade, and in the exports of less capitalistically developed countries. The biggest exporter of bulk raw materials is the USA, the most developed country.

Thirdly, there has been an enormous cheapening and speeding-up of transport and communications. Almost anything that can be traded, can be traded internationally. This is also the era of mass international air travel, mass international telephone communication, and the Internet.

Fourthly, the wage-working class, defined as those who sell their labour-power to capital and are exploited by capital, together with the children and retired people of that class, is for the first time ever probably the biggest class in the world's population.

It is difficult to say precisely; but Indonesia, which is one of the less capitalistically-developed countries in the world, has probably a higher proportion of wage-labour than Germany did in 1918, when the Bolsheviks would cite it as the epitome of a highly-developed capitalist country.

Capital did not suddenly flip over into new forms in 1990, or at any other particular date. All the developments I've listed are culminations of tendencies which go back a very long time. But in the 1990s the four developments I've mentioned reached a sort of "critical mass". That happened mainly through two processes.

Firstly, the economic crises of the 1970s and 80s. The period from the Second World War to the early 1970s was one of the gradual knitting-together of world trade, the gradual development of autonomous capitalist centres in many of the ex-colonial countries, and the gradual rise of transnational corporations.

CRISES

From the early 1970s there opened up an era in which the relations of capitalist states to the world market became a cause of tremendous economic crises for them.

The ruling classes were faced with options. They chose the option of reorganising their affairs so as to help their states compete as perches for global capital within a gradually-more-powerful world market, instead of the one of raising economic barriers and erecting siege economies on the model followed by capitalist states in the 1930s.

The interests within the ruling classes who looked towards the world market turned out to have hegemony, and to be prepared to pay a high price, not only in working-class suffering but also in the ruination of large sections of capital. In Britain, about one quarter of manufacturing industry was trashed in a few years, in the early 1980s. "Globalist" interests were able to establish their outlook as the new "common sense" of capital.

Another was the response of governments in poorer countries to the Third World debt crisis after 1982. Instead of defaulting on the debt and turning to a self-centred course of economic development, instead of emulating the economic nationalism of the 1930s, they responded by privatisations, anti-inflation policies, welfare cuts, deregulation, export drives — whatever was necessary to restore their credit with the international banks.

In capitalistic terms, and at great human cost, they were successful: witness the "rise of the BRICs" and the "emerging markets".

Alongside the response to economic crises of governments in West and South, the other essential process was the collapse of the Stalinist bloc and of the Stalinist model for industrial development. That in turn was tied up with

October 2011: London protest against cuts and corporate greed

the involvement of the East European states in the world market from the 1970s onwards.

Through those processes we had the speeding-up, and the achievement of a "critical mass", by the four developments I have listed.

All this happened in a period of working-class setbacks. It happened when the ruling classes had regained the initiative after the big working-class struggles of the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

In some countries there were big set-piece defeats for the working class — in Britain, the miners' strike of 1984-5 — and, in other countries, simply a petering-out of the struggles of the 1970s in disarray and disillusionment. The capitalist classes were eager and able to take their revenge. And that has shaped forms in which "globalisation" proceeded from the 1980s to now.

A push towards inequality, destruction of social provision, ecological damage and mass pauperisation is endemic to capital, but the working-class setbacks allowed the capitalist classes to add extra bite and sharpness. Although almost all capitalist countries are now complexly integrated into the world market, that is not true of all the world's population. From the point of view of global capital, vast millions of people are simply disposable surplus.

CAPITAL WRIT LARGE

Capitalist globalisation is capital writ large. It is not a number of other things which it is said to be.

It is not capitalism turned stateless. It is not a capitalism where the nation-state is withering away and markets, or transnational corporations, decide everything. Although it is a capitalism much more attuned to the world market, that attuning is carried out by the nation states. Capitalist globalisation is a process largely carried out by capitalist states. A precondition for its development is the emergence in less capitalistically-developed countries of capitalist states of a weight that they did not have previously, which have the power and confidence to carry through the policies of globalisation.

It is not capitalism turned American. It is not a world where instead of the old European empires we have semi-colonial rule by the United States. The USA is the biggest capitalist power. Between the 1970s and 2003 it was able to refute repeated declarations that it was in relative decline, riding high as a financial and "software" centre even though it came to import more factory goods than it produced. Since the fiasco of its invasion of Iraq, and the opening of the current economic crisis, its hegemony is in retreat.

Capitalist globalisation is not capitalism turned financial, or not just capitalism turned financial.

All the essential developments I have talked about were well in train before the recent huge expansion of financial markets. They have proceeded in the last 30 years in close intertwining with the expansion of financial markets, but it was not that the swirling-round of loot in financial markets had taken over from the extraction of surplus value in production as the driving force.

Evidence here is the European Union's push — reckless as it was from many capitalist points of view — towards a single currency. The single currency eliminates many financial markets, and reduces the disciplinary effect of world financial markets on individual countries in the European Union. Nevertheless the capitalist classes of Europe thought it worthwhile in the higher interests of international capitalist

integration.

A vast expansion of global financial markets is, however, built in to the current era. The big corporations have incomes, stashes, debts in a variety of currencies; and the relative values of those assets change frequently and often dramatically.

A standard textbook, for example, lists rates of return over 1999, not a period of turmoil, from international bonds in the richest countries held by dollar investors over 1999: they ranged from minus 14.4% to plus 14.3%.

Where, in what form, to hold their stashes? Where to raise loans? Big corporations have to consider these questions every day, and wrong decisions have big consequences.

The corporations or the investors go to financial firms. The financial firms seek more and more ingenious ways of laying off, balancing, or calculating risks. They say that "deep" financial markets — that is, ones with a big volume of buying and selling, where you can find a buyer for almost any proposition at a suitable price — enable the risk to be dispersed and balanced better. Computer technology and telecommunications have facilitated the development of ever "deeper" and more global markets.

In normal times, those financiers are right, in capitalist terms. "Deep" and complex financial markets do serve capital better. The vast, vastly complicated, and always-becoming-more-complicated structure of international credit has been an inseparable aide and accompaniment to the expansion of globalised capitalist production and trade. Its crises are inevitable crises, and more opaque and slippery than ever before.

Capitalist globalisation is capital writ large, capital raging across the world. The challenge for us, in response, is to rewrite working-class struggle on an equally large scale — to rewrite it on a scale which matches the new outreach of capitalism.

WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY

We have difficulties, in that we face now a broader and in some ways more "abstract" enemy.

How do we go beyond demonstrations against one after another symbolic world capitalist organisation — WTO, IMF, World Bank and so on, as happened in the years after the famous Seattle demonstration of 1999 — or symbolic "occupations" near Wall Street or the London Stock Exchange, to grapple with the substance of global capital?

We have advantages in the expanded size and scope of the world working class, and in the fact that almost everywhere in the world workers are now face-to-face with capital in a sense they were not even 20 years ago. We have advantages in our expanded ability and facility of communication between different sectors of the world labour movement.

Our problem is to try to recompose an organised movement of global working-class solidarity out of moods and the one-off actions across the world. To that we have to rediscover the ideas of internationalism, of consistent democracy, and of the political independence of the working class. Like every rediscovery of old ideas in a new context, our redevelopment of those principles will in part be a development of new ideas.

• Adapted and revised from articles in *Workers' Liberty* 63 and *Workers' Liberty* 50/51.

RMT members to join 30 November strike

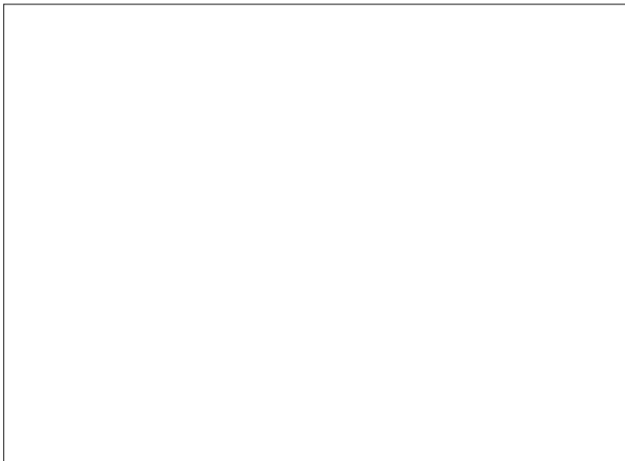
By Ira Berkovic

Over a thousand members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) who are part of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme will be balloted to join the mass public sector strike action on 30 November.

The workers are employed by Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Orkney Ferries and Nexus and DB Regio (who operate the Tyne and

Wear Metro), and the RMT's ballot brings the total of unions and professional associations potentially taking action on 30 November (including all those who hold live mandates, have begun balloting or expressed an intention to ballot) to seventeen.

One of the other unions, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), is already facing attempts at strikebreaking from local Fire Authority bosses, despite not having formally announced its



strike ballot. Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service is offering volunteer scabs £150 a day to undertake three weeks of intensive training so that they can provide cover on 30 November. The FBU says that putting "cardboard cut-out" volunteers without proper training into emergency situations will risk more lives than it will save.

Unison's ballot papers were sent out on Tuesday 11 October. They ask members in the NHS whether they are "prepared to take industrial action to defend [their] pension", a sufficiently broad phrasing of the question to allow the

union to use a yes vote as a mandate for ongoing action beyond 30 November. However, by not specifying what kind of industrial action is to be taken, Unison could use a narrow majority or a small turnout to claim that there is an insufficient mandate for strike action and only organise action short of strikes.

Bizarrely, the ballot paper also featured a paragraph explaining that workers can be disciplined for taking industrial action — informative, but hardly likely to inspire confidence. The ballot paper question for local government workers is phrased

differently, specifically asking whether members are prepared to take *strike* action. Historically, the nature of health workers' work has made them understandably less willing to take strike action. But the union needs to give its members the confidence to take whatever action necessary to win.

Super-union Unite, which has 250,000 members across the various public sector pensions schemes, has plastered its website with downloadable "vote yes!" posters, but says only that its ballot papers will be sent out "during October". The GMB union has also begun producing plentiful "vote yes" materials for its members, including bulletins and poster templates for workplace meetings, but is also yet to send out its ballot papers.

Questions still remain over what kind of action Unite and the GMB will ballot for. One day of protest strike action on 30 November cannot possibly put the brakes on the Tories' plans; unions must give themselves mandates for action beyond 30 November, including action

short of a strike and rolling, selective and escalating action where possible.

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) in pre-1992 ("red-brick") institutions have already begun action short of a strike in protest at reforms to the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts is mobilising student activists to support their lecturers (see <http://bit.ly/qOpC3G>).

Higher Education workers ballot over pay

Unite's National Education Industry Committee meets on Thursday 20 October to set a timetable for balloting its members in the Higher Education sector for strike action in a dispute about pay.

The union, which (along with Unison and GMB) organises non-academic staff in HE, has rejected a management pay offer of a £150 lump-sum for all staff (an average 0.5% increase), which it describes as "derisory". Taken together with the

previous two years' below-inflation pay deals this would amount to an 11% real-terms pay cut for HE workers since 2008.

Action from GMB and Unison, which also oppose the pay deal, is also a possibility. Members of the lecturers' union UCU voted to accept the deal, seemingly unconfident of taking on the employers on two fronts (pensions and pay) simultaneously.

Unite's ballot is expected to open on 28 October and close on 17 November.

Tube: vote to reject pay deal!

By a Tubeworker supporter

RMT members working for London Underground will vote on a pay deal for 2011-15, in a referendum closing on 27 October.

The RMT, along with the three other unions organising LU workers (ASLEF, TSSA and Unite), is recommending acceptance.

The deal on offer is for four years, meaning that Tube workers would not be able to fight again on the issue of pay — one of the only issues that consistently unites all grades of workers — until 2015. This would be a significant hindrance in a period when LU management plans to extend the job cuts programme that saw them axe 800 stations posts in early 2011, following around 1,000 mainly clerical jobs the previous year. Future job cuts are likely to come through salami-slicing, one grade at a time. Without a pay battle to unite around, it may be difficult to foster the all-grades unity needed to fend off such attacks.

The content of the offer has little to recommend it; it is below RPI in the first year. And, perhaps most importantly, it also means postponing a fight on other issues tied up in the deal, such as shorter hours and a flat-rate minimum



pay rise to benefit lower-paid grades.

An RMT reps' meeting voted by a big majority that the union should hold a referendum of members with a recommendation to accept the deal, so the union's Executive was right to do just that. The referendum gives union members the opportunity to vote to either accept or reject the deal, so members should hear the case for both. If members were only allowed to hear one side of the argument, there would be little point in holding a referendum and little credibility in its result. *Tubeworker* is putting the case for members of all unions voting to reject the deal. At least one RMT branch has also come out against the pay deal.

There are some instances in which strict collective discipline must be applied in trade unions. For example, when a vote to strike has been taken and a strike called, even those union members who voted against the action should be expected to participate. But there need be no such obligation to follow an Ex-

ecutive recommendation in a referendum about whether to accept a pay deal; after all, it is a recommendation, not an instruction. There is a big difference between adhering to the result of a vote once it has finished and participating in a debate during that vote about what the result should be.

Union members on London Underground have the right to think for ourselves and make up our own minds. We are not a flock of sheep who must be firmly led into making the right choices by our unions' leaders.

If some union members want to convince their workmates that accepting a four-year pay deal which is below RPI in the first year is wrong, then they should be free to do that without being accused of breaking discipline.

• For more, see workersliberty.org/twblog

Unite ballot in construction fight?

By a supporter of the Siteworker paper

There is (hopefully) a major development in our dispute.

Word is that Bernard McAulay [Unite national officer for the construction sector] is going to announce the balloting of Balfour Beatty Engineering Services [BBES] sites on Thursday [20 October] at the Unite officers' meeting in Leeds. Possibly three or maybe give BBES sites will be balloted; we are not sure which ones.

Although this would be a very good development, the rank-and-file must not take our eye of the ball or let up in any way.

Rumour has it that Unite could ask us to suspend the demonstrations during the ballot, but this would be a massive mistake. We cannot and will not be calling off any protests. Rather

than call off protests we need to ramp them up, and target all BBES sites across the country, big and small. They seem to have most of the work at the moment.

In London we are getting a team of people together to leaflet as many sites as we can in between protests to make everyone aware of what's going on with deskilling, informing other trades as well. Please do the same in your areas.

If you need help producing leaflets, let us know. Also contact Unite for leaflets, but if they won't supply them then do your own; a simple A5 leaflet will suffice.

NG Bailey [one of the other contractors threatening to withdraw from the collective agreement] have suddenly said they are up for taking things further by announcing consultation meetings with their workers and the threat of the

sack if you don't sign by end of November. This came out [on Thursday 13 October]; they quickly denied it but we think on this occasion there's no smoke without fire!

Remember BBES are leading the assault on our agreement; let's respond accordingly. Let's take them on. Give it to them with both barrels. It was they that declared war, and sadly there will be casualties.

Support the protests, try and get big turn outs, ask for support from other trades, other unions, other trade unionists... even your mates in the pub and relatives. If we win everyone gains!

Come rain come shine: never cross a picket line!

• This article is a slightly edited version of an update sent to the Siteworker e-list

Rank-and-file magazine relaunched

Trade Union Solidarity magazine has been relaunched as an activist resource for rank-and-file trade unionists.

The first issue features a survey on bus workers' struggles, an article on the public sector pensions fight and interviews with

activists from various sectors and industries. AWL member Jean Lane is interviewed about being a Unison rep in Tower Hamlets, and hip-hop artist The Ruby Kid (also AWL) is the subject of a cultural feature.

The magazine's pitch is

deliberately non-"political"; its interviews are more like worker testimonies than attempts to critically engage with "bigger" political questions.

Despite this, there is certainly a need in the British labour movement for a

rank-and-file activist publication.

Trade Union Solidarity could play a useful role in the period ahead as labour-movement activists seek ways of building up rank-and-file confidence and power.

• solidaritymagazine.org

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Euro-crisis needs Euro-wide workers' answer

By Rhodri Evans

On Sunday 23 October European Union leaders hold a summit conference where they will try again to patch up the eurozone economic crisis.

Patching up — at the expense of working people across Europe — is about the best they can hope for. The whole laboriously-constructed edifice of the eurozone is in danger of disintegration.

The threatened collapse of big banks in 2008, averted by big government interventions, has worked its way through into a crisis of European states' debts.

Greece's government has now long fallen off the wheel of borrowing, repaying, and even more borrowing on which all capitalist governments (and big capitalist corporations, though less so) must dance.

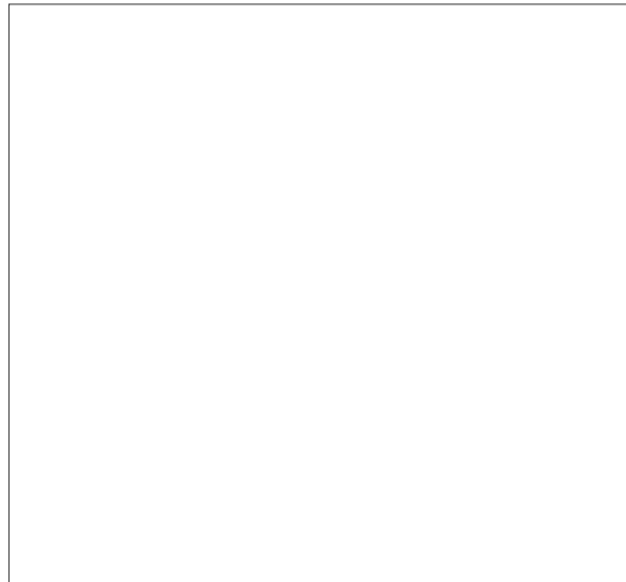
It has become depend-

ent on successive "bail-outs" by the European Central Bank, the European Union, and the IMF. These are actually partial "bail-outs" of the French, German, and other banks which have lent to the Greek government, and they come with demands for drastic cuts in Greece.

All across Europe governments are making cuts. End result: every country's main export markets, as well as its domestic markets, shrink. The debt crisis worsens.

The successive measures taken since Greece, Portugal, and Ireland fell foul of the global financial markets have not mended the crisis, but instead threaten to spread it to Spain and Italy. Now even France faces the risk of having its credit status downgraded.

European capital has vast wealth. In plain arithmetic there would be little problem with really "bailing out" Greece and the other poorer countries at



Merkel and Sarkozy are set to patch up a short-term solution to the eurozone crisis — at the expense of European workers

the expense of Europe's wealthy classes.

The governments won't do that, if only because rival national interests and the weakness of political and fiscal (public-budget) integration in Europe preclude it.

The crisis of Europe is a challenge for the labour movements of Europe. If the labour movements stand by passively, or at most each labour movement busies itself with defensive action in its national framework, then the working classes of all countries will be swamped by the wave of the developing continent-wide "double-dip" downturn.

And nationalist and anti-foreigner populist politics will probably fill the gaps left the labour movement's failure to fight for Europe-wide answers.

The latest declaration by the European Trade Union Confederation declares:

"Nowhere can we see any light at the end of the tunnel... The answer lies in a combination of reducing deficits and adopting investment measures for employment and for a sustainable recovery.

"We have long been advocating the idea of a New Deal where the priorities

would be a social Europe and a green Europe. The markets need to stop calling the tune.

"We say that to stop the attacks on sovereign debt, we need a partial mutualisation of the debt, a central bank that can guarantee these European bonds. We need to stamp out speculation; we need to introduce a tax on financial transactions and a fair fiscal system. We need to do away with tax havens and tax fraud".

All this is too little, too abstruse, too much a matter of declarations made from an office in Brussels disconnected from action on the ground, and too disconnected from any agency that could push it through.

The European labour movement should be rallied and united, in the first place, around a simple programme:

- Tax the rich — Europe-wide.
- Expropriate the banks and high finance — Europe-wide — and place them under democratic control, geared to a workers' plan for economic reconstruction, again Europe-wide.
- Level up social rights and conditions Europe-wide.

Dale Farm eviction imminent

By Bill Holmes

Travellers at the largest "illegal" encampment in Europe lost their last battle in the courts on 17 October and now face eviction.

On Tuesday 18th (as we go to press) Basildon Council confirmed that the eviction will begin on the 19th. Families must now rely on mobilising as many as possible and direct action if they are to resist the bailiffs.

The council is evicting 83 families from 49 plots on the site because they are in breach of planning law. The former scrapyard they own and live on does not have permission for residential use.

This is despite one half of the site, which the council ridiculously maintains is greenbelt land, having the relevant permission and being occupied by travellers.

Questioning where else they might live, the travellers say, "if not here then where — where better than a scrapyard?" Another site cleared by bailiffs in the Basildon area became a rubbish dump, rather than being used for homes.

Travellers and the council have been at odds for 10 years over the site.

The action being brought by the Tory-run Basildon Council, and backed up by the state through the courts and government funding towards the eviction, is tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

Travellers have said they will leave peacefully if alternative sites are found for them. Suggestions for alternatives have been made by the travellers. But they should not have to do this! The fact that no other sites have been deemed to be available demonstrates the lack of provision and highlights the effect of prejudice on gypsies and travellers.

Until recently planning guidelines stated that Basildon Council should provide land for 62 pitches, the vast majority of which could be accomplished by legalising the existing Dale Farm site. However, recent tearing up and re-writing of national planning policy has scrapped the need for regional targets for traveller pitches.

Socialists should not rely on financial arguments couched in an economic system that we seek to overturn. However, the fact that Basildon Council is spending £18 million on this eviction — not including legal fees and the cost of court-imposed delays — while simultaneously cutting jobs and services is particularly outrageous.

While workers lose their jobs, families, including young, sick and elderly people, are being made homeless.

Please help now if you can!

Dale Farm resident Kathleen McCarthy said: "We've been left with no choice — we really have nowhere else to go; do you think we'd put ourselves through this if we did?"

"The law is prejudiced against travellers — we were told 15 years ago to get off the road and buy our own land, but now they are forcing us and our kids out onto the road again.

"The barricades are all that stand between us and homelessness now."

Lily Hayes, a Dale Farm supporter, said: "The law, planning regulations and the judicial system all discriminate against travellers.

"Engaging in civil disobedience is the reasonable response to this senseless eviction which is making 86 families homeless.

"We will stand side by side with the residents to resist this eviction."

• More: dale-farm.wordpress.com.

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