

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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against austerity**

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

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Soaring cost of childcare

By Esther Townsend

No wonder it is expensive to bring up children. In January 2012, childcare costs were a whopping £63,099 of a total cost of raising a child until their 21st birthday of £218,000.

A recent report by Conservative MP Elizabeth Truss shone a spotlight on this; the report said UK has the second highest costs of childcare in Europe: 26.6% of average family incomes, or 40.9% of the average UK wage.

Truss sees a solution in simplified regulation — freeing up workers to care for more children at the same time.

Under current rules there has to be one carer for three children aged five or younger. Truss wants a ratio of 1:5. She argues that the current ratio limits the income of childcarers (an average £11,000 a year), lowering quality and pushing up prices.

Chief executive of the Daycare Trust Anand Shulka argued that changing the ratio would force nurseries to increase childcarer salaries, but, since that cost would be passed on to parents, it would not help parents. In reality, salaries probably won't increase but the profits of private childcare companies will.

More worrying, the changed ratio would inevitably reduce the quality of childcare and the amount of engagement and interaction children receive.

The Department for Education says it is investing in free early years education, and the government guarantees 15 hours per week free childcare/education. But the choice of childcare and overall support for bringing up children has been undermined by cuts to maternity grants and closures of Sure Start centres and after-school clubs (hit by local authority spending cuts).

Increasingly, parents won't be worrying about the quality of childcare, but whether they can use it at all. In the last two years, 24% of mothers have left work, and 16% have reduced their hours, because childcare costs are too expensive.

More than a third of UK parents rely on "informal" childcare arrangements: grandparents and other relatives — arrangements which break down when family circumstances change (e.g., when grandparents get ill).

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Single parents struggle to find work

By Cathy Nugent

In 2008 New Labour began to take away un-employed single parents' entitlement to Income Support (IS) when their youngest child reached a certain age — and the "qualifying age" was gradually reduced.

These parents were switched to Job Seekers Allowance and told to find work.

The Tories completed the erosion of any "special status" for single parents with the Welfare Reform Act — IS entitlement now stops when the youngest children are 5 or 6.

A recent report by Gingerbread, interviewing many single parents, highlights the huge difficulties these changes have brought into the lives of single parents.

"Flexible working" is an absolute must for most

parents but particularly so for single parents — the vast majority of whom are women — and even more so for parents of children as young as five or six as children of that age are not at all independent.

But "flexible work" is synonymous with poor pay, possibly inadequate hours (fewer than 16 hours a week) and insecurity. Not surprisingly, a high proportion (22%) of single parents who do manage to get work (not a given in the current economic climate) leave within a very short space of time.

The proportion of "churn" is very high for single parents for many reasons: it is more difficult to make childcare arrangements work if you are on your own; it is more difficult to cope with the "squeeze" of work and being a parent; and employers' belief that "flexible working" is "flexible"

for them alone is a disaster if, in the absence of a strong trade union on your side, you also have no partner or family to back you up.

From the interviews:

● "When I worked 20 hours and my son was in hospital, I asked to go in different days to work my hours and they said no."

● "According to the job centre there is a breakfast club at a local school but there isn't, because my children can't walk the mile and a half unsupervised between two schools if I am at work. I haven't got a Tardis, I'd love one but I don't."

● "I've looked into local child minders and costings, but there is nobody local. There is a nursery-cum-after school club but it is so expensive. And there's no bus link."

The benefit system does still allow for "flexibilities" for single parents, e.g., they can restrict their job search to certain jobs. But benefit advisers often withhold that information.

While unskilled, low paid, part-time jobs have

expanded over recent years, none of these jobs, meet the real needs of any workers. Nonetheless, under pressure to find work, single parents take up these jobs. Increasing competition for these jobs, and when many more people are taking up part-time work (even when they want full-time work), is making it much tougher for single parents.

In 2013 the introduction of Universal Credit will remove the threshold of 16 hours for when single parents can claim in-work benefits. DWP research shows that single parents will then go for "mini jobs" (of less than 16 hours). But these jobs (in so far as they exist) are even more short-term, and low paid.

The future for many single parents is one of massive insecurity: working for little scraps of money, being on and off benefits, rushing from one job to another, and trying to hold it all together against the odds.

Commissioning: GPs must consider "public" option

Stroud Against the Cuts (SATC), through their "Keep Gloucestershire's NHS Public" campaign, have scored a victory against NHS privatisation.

Responding to protests and legal action, the Department of Health has told NHS Gloucestershire it can give a non-tendered contract to a local NHS body as one of the options when commissioning the county's primary health services. Previously DH had ruled out this option.

SATC immediately attended the first public meeting of the shadow

GPs Clinical Commissioning Group, created by the Health and Social Care Act to take over the role of choosing which organisations provide local health-care services from the PCT in 2013.

SATC called for a "genuine" consideration of NHS options to run the county's nine community hospitals and nine health clinics, and will continue their public campaign, including among NHS staff, for this outcome.

● More: <http://keepglosnhspublic.posterous.com>

Health Alarm

Mobilise to save the NHS

11:59

PROTEST AGAINST CARE UK

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

On 16 May, the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts organised a demonstration in solidarity with Quebec students outside the Canadian High Commission. UK student activists joined Quebecois students to make noise against police repression of the movement in Quebec.

Quebec government tries to ban protest

By Ed Maltby

The student movement in Quebec faces an all-out offensive by the government.

For more than 90 days, more than 150,000 students in Quebec have been on an all-out indefinite strike against Quebec government plans to cut education funding and raise fees by 75%.

Demanding free education funded by taxing the rich, students have mounted mass demonstrations and confronted police violence. The government made a weak offer to representatives of the student protests at the beginning of May — but, following discussion in dozens of mass meetings around the province, students voted to reject it.

Now the government has passed Bill 78, which places

stringent and extraordinary restrictions on all protests taking place before June 2013, and criminalises anyone organising or helping organise actions which fall outside strict limitations.

In response the student movement has mounted more demonstrations: flaming barricades were erected in the streets of Montreal on Saturday 18 May. Quebecois students, organised in the radical coalition CLASSE, have issued a statement:

“To submit oneself to this law is to accept it. We are witnessing a historic face off between the government and youth. This law is a test. If we submit ourselves to it, we are acknowledging the efficacy of its repression: the government wins. If it wins once, it will do it again.

“This law has come to break the already rattled

confidence between the people and their institutions. Corruption and the influence of lobbies and economic interests on governments have birthed a political cynicism. ...This law deepens the nail in the coffin of Québécois democracy.

“With this law, the government is attacking much more than student associations: it is attacking the possibility that each woman and man should have to freely contest decisions that have been made in their names by those with political power.

“We affirm today that we refuse to capitulate to fear and intimidation. We stay loyal to our principles of individual and collective freedom.”

● Full text: www.arretezmoiquelquun.com

Iraqi unions resist anti-worker labour law

By Falah Alwan, President, Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq

The unions in Iraq are continuing our joint campaign against the imposition of a new labour law, and against governmental interference in union elections.

The labour code the government is currently proposing represents only the interests of the factory owners and big business. It's worse than the labour laws of the Saddam era. It guarantees no basic workers' workers, and prevents freedom of association and strikes. It also relates only to the private sector, as public sector workers are formally considered “public servants” rather than workers.

It would institutionalise a 48-hour week, which is the same as the first formal labour code in Iraq — from 1936, under a monarchy! It also discriminates against women workers by attempting to codify a tradition whereby widowed women leave the workplace and stay at home. There's also discrimination against non-Muslim workers; the right to time off for Islamic religious holidays and ceremonies is recognised, but this ignores the great number of Nepalese and other East Asian mi-

grant workers now working in Iraq.

The unions have held meetings and negotiations with representatives from the Ministry of Labour, which are ongoing. Unions will meet together on Saturday 19 May to discuss our ongoing campaigning and plan a conference.

We want any labour code to include legal guarantees of the right to strike and the right to organise. We want guarantees of healthy and safety, unemployment benefit and redundancy payments, none of which are guaranteed by the proposed law.

JOB

There have been some big struggles in Iraq recently against job losses.

On 17 and 18 April, workers staged sit-in protests and demonstrations at a petrochemical plant in Basra. 5,000 workers are employed by the company but the plant is operating at less than half its capacity; bosses say this means they have to lay off 3,116 workers. Hundreds of workers held a sit-in, followed by a general assembly of over 1,000 workers the following day. They demonstrated at the local government building and the authorities promised to intervene to protect jobs, or to ensure that the workers were relocated or re-

trained, or at least that they received redundancy settlements. It looks as if the job losses may have been postponed till 2013.

There are still problems in many workplaces with foreign investors using foreign labour to undercut domestic labour. At a refinery in Erbil, Iraqi workers have worse pay and worse conditions than migrant workers. In Kerbala, there is a dispute around workload at a cement factory operated by the French company Lafarge. Foreign investors like Lafarge have taken over the operation of a lot of factories and plants with old equipment and, despite committing to upgrade it, have failed to make improvements. However, they still expect workers to maintain production rates that the machinery isn't really capable of. Workers at the Lafarge plant in Kerbala want a production rate of 60,000 tonnes per month but the bosses are demanding much more than that. Workers have struck to demand pay increases to match the increased workload.

These sort of problems and disputes can be expected to continue and increase as the government wants the Ministry of Industry to become self-financing over the next year.

This will mean a great deal more privatisation and private investment.

All at sea with the Pirate Party of Germany

By Matt Heaney

A new-ish political party is changing German politics. Apparently.

A secretive bunch in some ways, who often use “party names” in public and while discussing with other members, yet who at the same time have “transparency” as the main element in their as yet thin political programme.

Largely male, the members use antiquated greetings and — for outsiders — an often strange language, impenetrable to those not in the know and those without the technical know-how to take part.

After elections the group is now taking its maiden voyage in the Berlin city-state parliament, further excursions as the kingmaker in north-German Schleswig-Holstein, and an success in North-Rhein Westphalia. It may cause two unstable political ships,

of the neoliberal FDP and the Left Party, to sink.

I'm not talking about some far-left grouping, though some “abuse” them as such. This is the Pirate Party Germany, who, founded in 2006, recently held their largest-ever party conference.

I watched hours of that conference over the internet. It was held in a civic sports hall somewhere in the western German provinces. About 1,200 members were present.

For an organisation which looks set to overtake the Greens as Germany's third party, while helping the neoliberal FDP into its grave, and at the same time possibly putting the “Left Party” into a permanent vegetative state, and whose main selling point is being dilettantish and “anti-party”, the convention was very old-school.

The very idea of delegates is frowned upon —

conferences are open to all members and anyone could speak — but there were a lot of technical interventions, some of them bordering on the ridiculous.

For example, a vote was taken on whether during the card votes to the leading committees — there is a chairperson, but no “leader” as such — episodes of “My Little Pony” should be beamed onto the wall.

PONY

“Ponytime” is a popular concept among the Pirates, especially when debates cannot be resolved easily.

“My Little Pony” holds important lessons for us all about how people (or unicorns) can get on with each other, despite differences.

There are reasons why and how the Pirates have become so successful. Aside from the German electoral system, which makes it eas-

ier for smaller parties to get elected, there is an important “hacker movement”, with structures and organisations of its own.

In Germany in 1984, the “Chaos Computer Club” proved that online banking was anything but safe, by breaking in to the Prestel (basically teletext over the telephone, a forerunner of the internet) account of the Hamburg Savings Bank and transferring themselves 135000 Deutschmarks over one evening. This knocked back people's trust in state organs — and in the state-owned bank's trust in the telecommunications system which they had been assured was unbreakable.

Similarly there was a massive campaign against the first census in West Germany in 1987. People feared the state nosing into their personal affairs, the storage of data on (then massive) computer systems, leading to the census

being abandoned. In East Germany the “state security” Stasi had a large percentage of the population voluntarily giving information on friends, acquaintances and workmates.

And the Nazis under Hitler used computers from IBM to organise the holocaust.

There is, therefore, a certain sensitivity to technology and the rise of the observation state. When the government tried to introduce laws to block certain internet sites — a legal censorship mechanism — the arguments, familiar from Britain, regarding child pornography didn't wash. Especially when one minister responsible didn't even know what an internet browser is.

The campaign argued for “deletion, not censorship” (which could be easily got around anyway). Data retention laws have also not (yet) been introduced in

Germany for similar reasons.

Such laws, which are in Britain naively referred to as a “snoopers' charter”, involve the storage of personal data of basically everyone, regardless of whether they are suspected of criminal activity. They make everyone a suspect.

The current successes of the Pirates in Germany base on two things: a general mistrust of career politicians and disinterest in career-party politics. Many voters are previous non-voters. The other reason is the public debate on internet and data issues, where the politicians involved have been shown to have been out of their depth.

At some point the Pirates must decide whether they want to develop a political programme.

And whether they are of the left, or of the right. It is still hard to tell.

Rebekah Brooks is *very* angry



Press Watch

By Pat Murphy

On 13 May Rebekah Brooks, her husband and five other people were arrested and told that she faced three separate charges (conspiracy to pervert the course of justice) related to hacking into voicemails by the *News of the World*.

Rebekah is angry. In a statement she professed herself baffled by the decision to charge her. Her husband described her as the victim of a witch-hunt. His own arrest was no more, he claimed, than an attempt to 'ratchet up the pressure' on her. The most revealing aspect of Rebekah Brooks' reaction, however, was how upset she was about how "those closest to me... have been dragged into this unfairly."

It would take a clumsy novelist or playwright to invent a character so weighed down with hypocrisy. As full of self-regard as she is lacking in self-awareness, Brooks has discovered, after years of celebrating privilege, wealth and power, a hunger for fairness.

Having used her company's papers to attack the most vulnerable, preach self-reliance to the jobless and urge government to exclude and expel those fleeing torture and repression, she now pleads for justice. Most hypocritically of all she chooses to single out the involvement of "those closest to me" as the final straw, the greatest injustice. Let's think for a moment about the principle.

Rebekah Brooks was editor of the *News of the World* from 2000 to 2003 and then editor of the *Sun* until 2009. Her time at the NoW coincides with the worst of the phone-hacking scandals, hence her resignation, appearance before Leveson and arrest. Baffling it isn't. She was in charge when the phone of missing teenager Milly Dowler was hacked into and voicemails which may have provided the police with some clue as to her fate were deleted. How angry the Rebekah of 2012 must be at the "unfairness" meted out to the Dowler family by her 2002 alter ego.

CONCERNS

When public figures raised concerns about phone-hacking, secret taping and so on her papers paid no regard to the sensitivities of their family or friends.

A series of articles in 2003 ridiculed Labour MP Chris Bryant starting with a picture of him in his underpants from a gay dating website. His actual offence was to be on the Media Select Committee and ask some searching questions about her paying the police for information (now known to be true).

Even before the hacking scandal Brooks' career was characterised by some of the most insensitive and unempathetic journalism. As editor of the *Sun* in 2003 she ran a front page story about the mental health problems of boxer Frank Bruno under the headline "Bonkers Bruno Locked Up". At the *News of the World* she pioneered the campaign to publish the names and addresses of alleged paedophiles in the wake of the Sarah Payne murder case. The populist campaign was successful in terms of sales and readership but criminally indifferent to the risk of violent vigilantism, including against innocent victims. A paediatrician had her house vandalized by people who thought her occupation made her a danger to children. Unlike the arrest of a woman clearly associated with criminal practices in the media organisation she ran, that really was a witch-hunt.

Brooks has now discovered that innocent people can be "unfairly dragged into" scandals. Unfortunately her description of the people close to her as victims is no more convincing than her claim to be baffled at the charges against her.

We cannot know whether the charges against Brooks and her clan will be upheld, but they certainly don't lack clarity or detail. She, her husband, PA, chauffeur and a NI security man are accused of conspiring to conceal material from the police. All of the accused, apart from her husband, are or were employees of Rebekah Brooks and News International. They are not simply bystanders or family members with no connection to the organisation at the heart of this affair.

Clearly still struggling to cope with her loss of power, Rebekah will have to let the courts decide whether these people have had any involvement with the central issues. Meantime she should maybe reflect on the inverse link between fairness and power. The less power you have, the more important justice is.

Brooks had to lose only a small bit of her previous power to become very angry indeed about injustice and fairness. She might be improved immensely as a person if she loses an awful lot more.

Questions for the democracy movement in Morocco

Platform

By Ziyad Mohammed, an activist of the Moroccan Trotskyist group Revolutionary Marxist Current

On the 19 and 20 of February — the first anniversary of the [Arab democracy] movement in Morocco — rallies and demonstrations took place in dozens of towns. One year on, although the movement has not won its demands, the determination is still there.

But if the battle is far from over, many questions remain. Did not the policy of concentrating on the demand for a democratic constitution and the struggle against corrupt statesmen give rise to a broad perception of the Movement of 20 February as being mainly oriented towards reform or changing institutions and personnel rather than changing the daily, concrete conditions of life and work of the immense majority?

The platform and slogans adopted, while they may have allowed for partial unity of organised groups, did they allow for popular unity in action? Did they allow the movement to address sacked workers? To the unemployed? To peasants who have no land to survive on? To the millions of people who live in shanty towns or who are unable to pay their rent? To millions of women who are prisoners of the patriarchy and whose desire for equality was only given consideration after Al Adl Wal Ihsan [hard-right Islamists] left the movement?

Is not the political platform too defensive? A democratic constitution — but to what end?

Has not the movement had difficulty in linking itself to other social movements and concrete popular struggles? [E.g.] how to tie links between the movement of unemployed graduates and the movements of the unemployed more broadly? The course of the democratic struggle will be decided by the responses to these questions.

A "profile" centred on social questions implies creativity in forms of organisation and action. There is a need to reflect on the forms of organisation which would allow the movement to root itself in the daily life of working-class districts and workplaces; and to move beyond the current form of organisation in creating committees of popular struggle which aim to be active in all the theatres of conflict, local and national; to orient part of the activity of the committees to aid on day-to-day issues, not in the manner of Islamist clientelism, but in a project of concrete solidarity which speaks to people and gives a greater social and moral legitimacy to the movement.

The demonstrations are reaching their limits. There is a need to imagine forms of occupation which aim to give mass support to current struggles and set up new campaigns.

Can we move towards new forms of trade union struggle which advance the common interests of workers, eliminate bureaucratic blockages, and combine specific demands with the need for a general response to policies which are hostile to the people?

Many other questions could be posed, but the key thing is to debate, not just the gains of the movement which we all recognise, but the road which remains to be travelled.

British unions out of step on Histadrut



Eric Lee

As PCS convenes this week (23-24 May) in Brighton for their annual conference, delegates will be expected to vote on a wide range of issues, including some international ones.

Buried deep in the more than 200 pages of conference documents is this sentence: "Conference ... instructs the NEC to ... [c]all on trade unions around the world to review and sever all ties with the Histadrut."

This the only reference to the Histadrut in the entire document - and there is no explanation to PCS delegates what the Histadrut actually is. Delegates presumably know that the Histadrut is something evil, and that unions in other countries would almost certainly welcome the PCS call for the them to "review and sever" ties with Israel's national trade union centre.

There is no indication in the resolution that there is anything remotely controversial about this.

UNPLEASANT

If the resolution passes, and if the PCS NEC actually does go about telling unions around the world to break with the Histadrut, they may be in for a rather unpleasant surprise.

Let's start with the two global union federations that the PCS proudly affiliates to — Public Services International and UNI Global Union.

Both have Histadrut affiliates as members and both publicised the Histadrut's recent general strike.

PCS is also affiliated to the TUC, which in turn is part of the International Trade Union Confederation — which not only has the Histadrut as a member, but which elected Histadrut chairman Ofer Eini as one of its vice presidents. I think it's unlikely that PSI, UNI or the ITUC will be particularly welcoming to the PCS call to toss the Histadrut out.

A week before PCS convened in Brighton, representatives of nearly 400 trade unions in the food and agriculture sector met in Geneva for the world congress of the International Union of Food workers (IUF). The Histadrut representative addressed the congress twice. The first time, she spoke about precarious work — a key priority of trade unions around the globe. When she mentioned that the Histadrut had secured a collective bargaining agreement with a local subsidiary of catering giant Sodexo, her speech was interrupted with applause. During the closing session, she spoke

again — this time following speakers from Egypt, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria and Palestine. She welcomed the new Palestinian affiliate to the IUF and asked unions to help build up links between Palestinian and Israeli unions — and was once again applauded. When elections were held to choose the IUF's new Executive Committee, a representative of Histadrut was re-elected.

No one at the IUF congress called for the Histadrut to be expelled from the organisation. No one rose to leave the hall when the Histadrut representative spoke. No one heckled or booed her speeches.

And I repeat: in the hall were representatives of the newly-independent unions from the countries of the "Arab Spring" — including the Palestinian agricultural workers union. None of them mentioned the Histadrut in their speeches. There was only one reference that I heard to Israel, and that was a sentence or two from the Palestinian delegate about how difficult the occupation of the West Bank was for workers — a valid point. But not a word of criticism of the Histadrut.

WORD

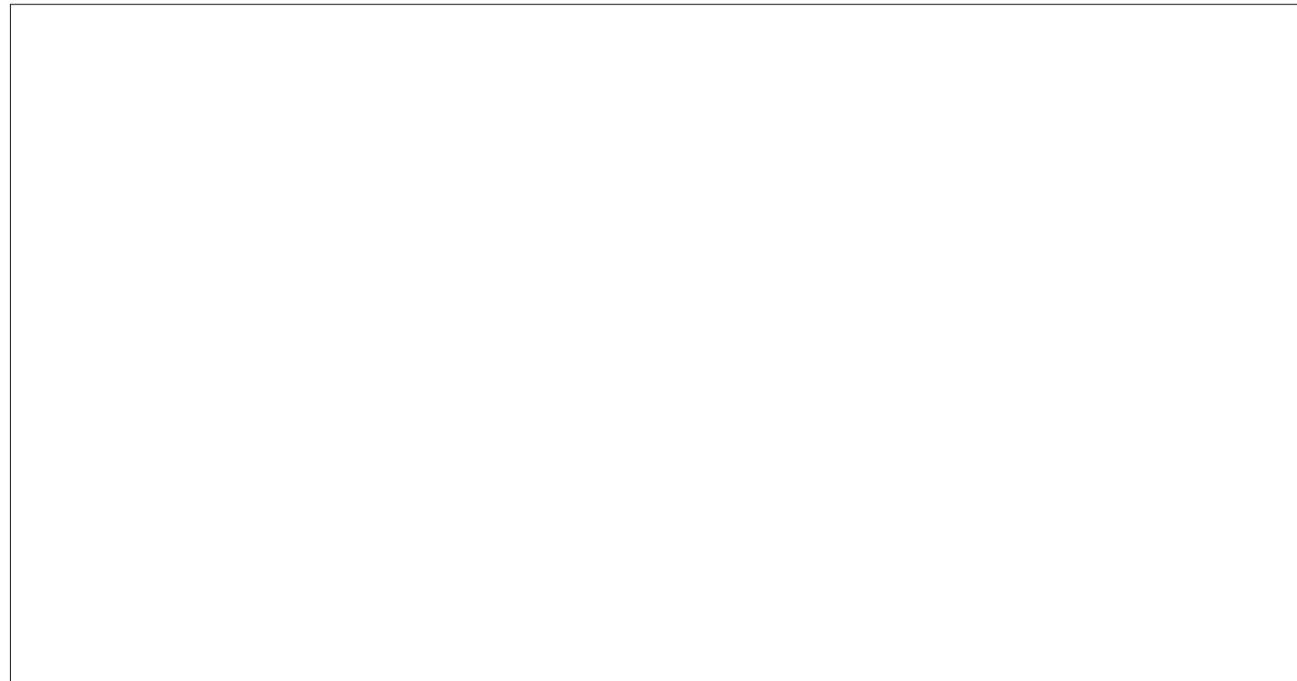
Even the South African unions, some of which have been outspokenly anti-Israel, had not a word to say on the subject. Nor did the British trade unions, some of which have said some very critical things in the past about Histadrut.

Something very odd is going on in the British labour movement.

Unison, for example, sent a delegation to Israel and Palestine and asked everyone — Palestinians, left-wing Israelis, and others — whether British unions should sever relations with the Histadrut. And every single one of them said "no". The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) was adamant on this point. They don't agree with everything the Histadrut says or does — but they are convinced that only by engaging with it can one influence it. The report of the Unison delegation was approved by the union's NEC, but then Unison went on to call for a boycott of the Histadrut. In spite of what its own delegation learned.

The fact is that British trade unionists are deeply ignorant about the Histadrut. Many of them believe that Histadrut doesn't have Arab members, for example. This ignorance drives them adopt resolutions whose only effect is to isolate British unions from the mainstream of the international trade union movement, which has much more realistic and informed view.

When representatives of PCS start telling "trade unions around the world" what to do about the Histadrut, they may find themselves compelled instead to listen and to learn. Maybe they would even reconsider their view.



Alexis Tsipras in Paris

Help the Greek left!

Alexis Tsipras, leader of the Greek left coalition Syriza, visited Paris on 21 May and spoke to a crowd outside the National Assembly.

"The war we are fighting in Europe is not between people or nations. It is between the forces of labour and the invisible forces of finance and the banks.

"It is difficult to be victorious over an enemy when that enemy has no face, no programme, no political party, yet it governs us. If we perfect our victory in Greece it will send a great message of hope throughout Europe.

"Greece is a link in a chain. If it breaks it is not just the link that is broken but the whole chain. What people have to understand is that the Greek crisis concerns not just Greece but all European people so a common European solution has to be found.

"The public debt crisis is hitting the south of Europe but it will soon hit central Europe. People have to realise that their own country could be threatened.

"We are fighting the battle in Greece not just for the Greek people but for people in France, Germany and all European countries.

"They talk about austerity programmes; but in Greece, it is not just an austerity programme. It is a European experiment in neo-liberal shock doctrine, which has led my country into an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

"There is nothing to negotiate in the [EU/ ECB/ IMF] memorandum. You don't negotiate hell.

"If this experiment continues in Greece it will be exported to other European countries.

"I am not here to blackmail, I am here to mobilise".

Tsipras said he was bringing "a message of hope" to Europe. Over the next three weeks or so, up to Greece's new election on 17 June, a race will be run between that message of hope and the message, from EU leaders and the bankers

and bosses behind them, of blackmail.

Syriza's advance in Greece's 6 May election has shaken the rulers of Europe enough that the meeting of EU leaders on 23 May is likely to suggest some softening in, or offsets to, the Euro-cuts programme. But only some.

Those sops will be designed only to tell the Greek people that if they vote for New Democracy, Greek equivalent of the Tory party and Syriza's leading rival for the 17 June election, then ND will be able to negotiate adjustments and recalibrations.

But the threat will remain brutal: if the Greek people vote for the left, and for a programme which says that the economic crisis should be tackled by taxing the rich rather than by pauperising the people, then the EU leaders will threaten to expel Greece from the eurozone and maybe the EU, and leave its relatively small economy to crash and burn in the world market.

The EU leaders can make that threat stick only if the labour movements of Europe let them do it.

The EU leaders want the threat to work by threat alone. There is no legal mechanism to expel a country from the eurozone: they would have to invent one.

To go ahead with the threat will damage them too. Experts reckon the cost to EU governments of expelling Greece from the euro to be at least 225 billion euros first-off, and almost certainly more with reverberations and ricochet effects.

The EU leaders can be forced to retreat from the threat, and then to retreat from the whole continent-wide Euro-cuts drive, if the labour movements mobilise.

• *Solidarity* skips a week at the end of May because of the difficulties of organising sales on the holiday weekend 2-5 June. *Solidarity* 248 will be printed on 5-6 June.

Help the AWL raise £20,000

AWL branches around the country are organising fundraising socials to help our fund drive and argue for our politics.

The North East London AWL branch has hired the tenants' hall on a housing estate and plans a film showing of the Marlon Brando film *Burn* on Saturday 9 June. The film deals with issues of colonialism, racism and liberation and tells the story of a slave revolt on the island of Guadeloupe.

Organising events like this is a good opportunity for Workers' Liberty members to promote and discuss our politics in a less formal environment, as well as raising some money for our group.

Help us widen our circle of readers but supporting us financially. But you can also contribute by writing for *Solidarity* — a letter, a report, a review, a feature. Or why not take copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

You can help by:

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

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

● Organising a fundraising event

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

● Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

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



Total raised so far: £13,048

Once again we raised only a small amount last week — £100 — from donations.

Thanks to Caroline and Richard.

Standing order authority

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Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

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Will Merkel budge?

Right un

By Theodora Polenta

New Democracy (Tory) leader Antonis Samaras is intensifying his attempts to create a centre-right front against Alexis Tsipras and the prospect of a government of the left in Greece.

He wants to get ND into government by exploiting the bonus of the 50 seats that is given to the top party. According to all polls, the election on 17 June will be tough for ND, with a close contest for the lead between the Radical Left and ND.

On 21 May a merger was announced between ND and Dora Bakoyannis's ultra neo-liberal party Democratic Alliance.

Bakoyannis, whose party failed to enter the parliament in the 6 May elections because it was below the 3% threshold, will be placed in first position on the ND ballot list, which will guarantee her election. Other members of her party will be placed in electable positions.

Just last November Bakoyannis said: "ND has adopted an ultra-right, ultra-nationalistic, populist orientation that is not compatible with the European context. ND has adopted national socialist opinions. ND exploits the genuine patriotism of people and diverts it in anti-European nationalistic parochial directions".

The ideological basis of the common electoral platform of ND and Bakoyannis is ultra neo-liberalism, with emphasis on reducing the "wasteful" state. In her election platform for May, Bakoyannis promised to outdo the Papademos government's planned 150,000 public sector redundancies. She wants the privatisation programme speeded up, and labour laws and workers' rights dismantled.

SECURE

Samaras states that the common aim is to rescue Greece from the crisis and secure Greece's position in the eurozone. According to him, Syriza is going to lead Greece out of the euro and into a bigger crisis.

Both Bakoyannis and Samaras accuse Tsipras and Syriza of misleading the Greek people, using populist language, and exploiting people's anger to lead Greece out of the EU and into bankruptcy, isolation, and chaos.

Georgios Karatzaferis, of what was previously the main far-right party, Laos, has for his own opportunistic political reasons declined a call from Samaras to join forces, but already three ex-MPs from Laos are expected to announce to join the ND lists: Plevris, Velopoulos and Kiltidis.

This two-sided expansion of ND exposes the fuzzy borders between dogmatic "small-state" neo liberalism and the xenophobia, nationalism and anti-Semitism of Laos.

Laos has repeatedly called for military dictatorship. Its founding statement proposed that political decisions be made by a council including military officers and Church officials. Athanasios Plevris, an ex-Laos MP who will now be a candidate on the ND list, is the son of the Laos ideologist Kostas Plevris, who published a book *Jews—The Whole Truth*, in which he praised Adolf Hitler, and called for the extermination of the Jews, depicted Jews as sub-humans, and described himself as a "Nazi, fascist, racist, anti-democrat, anti-Semite".

Makis Boridis, another ex-Laos MP and current ND MP, was before joining Laos the youth secretary of EPEN, a party that was created from inside prison by the military dictator of Greece from the 1967 junta Georgios Papadopoulos. As a student, Makis Boridis participated in violent attacks against anarchists. There are pictures of him holding hammers alongside his fascist gang, and posing alongside French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Two other ultra neo-liberal parties which failed on 6 May to cross the 3% threshold to get MPs are expected to announce a common list for 17 June: Action (Drasi), led by Stefanos Manos, and "Recreate Greece", led by Thanos Tzimeros. If the new list wins MPs on 17 June, it will provide indispensable help for ND.

On 6 May elections the three hard-core neo-liberal parties got 6.5% between them..

That indicates a sizeable presence in Greek society, for the first time, of a power that clearly and comprehensively advocates the destruction of all social protection, welfare provision, and labour legislation in order to entrepreneurship and

There is an area for autonomous decision by the European Central Bank here. In reality the ECB's decision is made in discussion with the governments, but formally it is their decision. The area in a compromise package that the ECB would be responsible for would be a structured recapitalisation of the Greek banks, which are the most fragile brick in the edifice.

The decision on the granting of the major bail-out funds is a matter for the euro-area governments. They do not have the power to expel Greece, but they have the power to say that their conditions are not being met and they will not deliver the next round of bail-out funding.

A messy default would be triggered not by an act of removing Greece from the euro-area, which they can't do, but as a consequence of the fact that without further bail-out funds, internal Greek financing of the state's operations would dry up within weeks. That could easily lead to the famous contagion danger. Financiers conclude that if the EU leaders are willing to do that to Greece, who are we to know that they won't do it again with Spain or Portugal? That would trigger the kind of run on the banks that you saw the beginnings of in Spain last week.

My judgement is that everybody knows that this a process that could easily get out of control. The EU leaders say they could have a firewall big enough to insulate all the other states other than Greece, but that firewall does not yet exist. There is a firewall, but it is nowhere near big enough to contain the tsunami-like consequences which could flow from a messy unilateral de fact departure of Greece from the euro area.

PRESSURE

There are huge pressures on both sides [Greek government and EU leaders] to deliver concessions.

My view, reading the internal German debate, seeing that the opposition SPD has said it may not support the final Bundestag stage of the European fiscal treaty ratification if there are not growth initiatives, knowing that the European Commission has a series of measures all prepared and ready to go ahead to focus investment through the European Investment Bank and the EU funds on the periphery, is that the outcome is likely be within the margins of supplementary investment spending and a year or two extra to meet fiscal targets.

Interestingly, the CSU in Bavaria, which normally is on the madcap right of the CDU spectrum, is now saying that there should be a more balanced strategy, because the CSU also has a trade-union wing [Catholic trade-unionists].

On balance, I think at this time the forces probably exist to enforce some concessions.

The European Central Bank is limited in what it does by its statutes. It can and does intervene in the European banking system to counteract the liquidity strains, which we now know last year were very close to a Lehman-type collapse — no bank would lend to any other bank because they did not know what they had on their books.

The Tory government is now saying that the EU and the ECB have really got to act, and why? Not so much because the British banks are so massively exposed to Greece — they're not — but they are massively exposed to other European banks which are exposed to Greece.

The argument that has been going on between the German conservatives, particularly the Bundesbank, and the rest of the ECB, is that although in theory the ECB's role is restricted to the provision of liquidity [i.e. of cash, to banks and others which have sufficient sound assets but just have trouble converting them to cash], in practice the ECB has been helping fundamentally insolvent countries to keep the show on the road.

The ECB would say no, those countries are not yet insolvent, and so the ECB is free to lend.

Even with a formal suspension of the next Greek bail-out installment, the ECB could buy Greek government bonds. But that would be a clear violation of its statutes which ban the ECB from funding insolvent states.

The ECB could also just provide more short-term liquidity to Greek banks. But if the ECB did that, would the markets be fooled? Or would the financiers just say that the ECB had given them another week or two to get their euros out of every hole in the wall?

John Palmer, former European editor of the *Guardian*, spoke to *Solidarity* about what the current talk among EU leaders about "growth initiatives" is likely to yield.

In the polls in Greece, New Democracy are about two or three points ahead of Syriza at this point of time, so it's by no means certain that the outcome on 17 June will be the Syriza victory which looked likely shortly after 6 May.

If Syriza emerges on top, what happens will largely depend on the nature of the agreement which is to be negotiated at the European summit on 23 May. The Syriza leader has been invited to France and Germany, and he is travelling this week to have discussions with the powers that be in Paris and Berlin.

I imagine he will be briefed on what kind of package they think they can unfold at the full EU summit on 28-29 June. The question for him will be whether it is in any sense acceptable — will he reject it out of hand? — or will he claim that the intervention of Syriza, and its determination to oppose needless austerity, has paid off by producing at least the beginnings of a shift in policy.

Tsipras's position is that Syriza wants Greece to say in the euro, and he also says — what is true — that there is no legal way to expel a member of the euro area.

STRATEGY

But if the government in Athens does not pursue a strategy which the rest of the EU states can accept, then those other states are under no obligation to sustain the big cash flows which have kept the Greek banks ticking over.

At the end of June or shortly thereafter, the need for a further major capital injection will become critical because at that point the Greek state will not have funds to pay its own employees, or pensions, or all the rest of it.

What margins are realistically available for something that might be hailed as a liveable compromise? That is difficult to say. If the opinion polls are right, then the more likely scenario is that New Democracy, with Pasok and maybe one or two smaller parties, will emerge to claim some concessions as a triumph for Greek insistence on a change in the euro-area policy.

Within Syriza there is a complex debate going on. I counted, the last time I looked, six or seven different factions, with a wide range of views, as between say the greens and some of the further-left elements within Syriza. On top of everything else, you have to judge what the internal balance of the argument within Syriza will be if — and I stress if — the Euro-summit comes out with a big acceleration of capital investment through the European Investment Bank and through the EU budget within the peripheral economies and especially Greece.

Merkel said the other night in a press conference, and it wasn't picked up outside the German media, that there "may be circumstances in which we could review the exact terms" of austerity. I think that is code for what they have already offered the Spanish, more time to meet the targets.

ites to blackmail voters

promote growth (over the corpses of the workers and youth: but that's a detail that does not seem to be particularly important to the neo-liberals).

Layoffs for four hundred thousand public-sector workers, says Stefanos Manos. Fund education with vouchers, says Bayokannis. Ban demonstrations in the streets and parties suspected of wishing to overthrow the regime, says Tzimeros.

In this crisis the ultra neo-liberals converge with the populist nationalistic ultra-right in their attempts to crush the working class and encourage global capital to invest in a Greece which has Bulgarian wages of €200 and €300 per month and German prices.

These developments make it even more urgent issue to rally the Left coalition to overturn the cuts and pave the way for a government of the Radical Left.

PARTICIPATE

The whole left should register the left turn by workers and the poor to Syriza, and refuse to participate in the witch-hunt against Syriza launched by the bourgeois parties (assisted by the Stalinist KKE).

At the same time, we should not cease to criticise Syriza for its reformist policies and its defensive stance towards the eurozone blackmail.

We do not want to return to the drachma, and we are not going to actively campaign for an exit from the euro within the context of capitalism. Our slogan should be clear: No sacrifice for the euro. We refuse to sacrifice the majority of the Greek population to rescue the euro and the Greek bondholders' interests.

The dilemma drachma or euro has been built up as a blackmailing slogan. Behind the call to "stay with the euro" is hidden a demand to accept the EU/ ECB/ IMF memorandum policies.

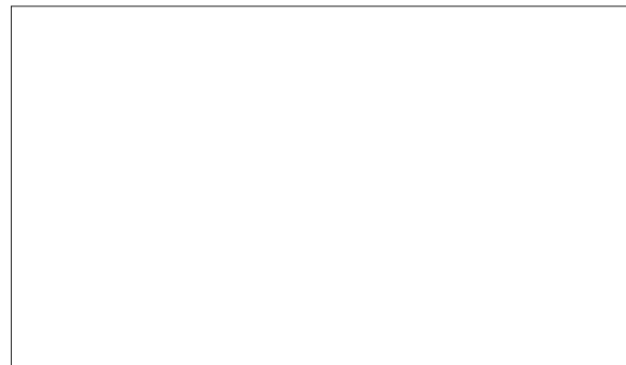
A government of the Left should immediately reverse the austerity packages already voted through, independent of whether if that "safeguards" Greece's position in the euro or "increases" the chances of our exit from the Euro.

It is also the duty of the revolutionary left to warn about the dangers of a "popular front" left government of the Al-lende type.

We should not remain blind to the popular hopes invested to a government of the Left, but we stress that a real government of the Left should be a workers' government, based on the organs of workers' power (workers' committees, popular assemblies, workers' defence squads etc.)

● More on Greece: see page 5

Defence minister welcomes Nazis



By Theodora Polenta

On Thursday 17 May, all the media interest was directed towards the entry into the parliament for the first time of elected MPs from the openly racist and Neo-Nazi gang of Golden Dawn.

Cameras captured the Nazi symbol on a ring worn by Golden Dawn leader Nikos Michaloliakos. The Golden Dawn MPs refused to stand up when Muslim MPs swore in the Koran.

KKE secretary Aleka Pappariga turned aside to avoid facing the Golden Dawn MPs, and ex-leftist (now Pasok) MP Mimis Androulakis refused to participate in the inauguration of the government in protest at the Golden Dawn's entry into parliament.

But Frangos Frangoulis, the new caretaker Minister of Defence, greeted Nikos Michaloliakos with a warm handshake.

Shortly before Pasok leader George Papandreou resigned in late 2011, he and then defence minister Panos Beglitis sacked the entire General Staff of the armed forces, leading to widespread suspicions that they were worried about a coup. Frangos Frangoulis was among those sacked in that clear-out.

Golden Dawn has praised Frangoulis over the arrival of 400 Abrams tanks from USA which, according to Golden Dawn, will make Greece the top armoured force in Europe.

Golden Dawn demands: "Increase the power given to the military forces". "Massively increase defence spending". "Liberate the North of Epirus [i.e. southern Albania] and unify it with mother Greece". "Liberate occupied Cyprus".

The newspaper *VIMA* (11 May) estimates that one in two police officers voted Golden Dawn.

Pasok Prime Minister George Papandreou mobilised the

army to suppress strikes against cuts. In August 2010, soldiers broke the strike by truckers against the deregulation of their profession. In October 2011, the government placed striking refuse workers under military discipline and forced them back to work. On 4 February 2011, Athens News Agency reported that the army's 71st Airborne Brigade had staged a mock battle with anti-austerity protesters.

In May 2011, a CIA report declared that a coup in Greece was a possibility.

This should be viewed in the context of the €8 billion of annual military spending that has not been cut in the last two years' vicious attacks.

An exit of Greece from the euro (whether it is a forced exit, or a soft negotiated exit) would unavoidably lead to a reduction in military spending. Unless there is a workers' government, able and willing to organise workers' control to safeguard livelihoods, chaos and uncontrollable anger will prevail. The call for a military man or a colonel to govern the country with an iron fist may gain ground.

PARAMOUNT

It is of paramount importance that the main forces of the left (Syriza, KKE, Antarsya) form a united front to confront the fascist threat.

KKE has only recently started to recognise the danger of Golden Dawn and open a front against them, at least in its newspaper. The political consequences and the conclusions about direct action are yet to be drawn by KKE.

It is true that a robust and combative working class movement that leads the struggle against the austerity measurements, the poverty and the unemployment enforces and strengthens the unity of the working class against racist prejudices and it has the potential to defeat stop the growing of the fascists. But it is a mistake when some sections of the left to underestimate the necessity to build up a specific political front to fight against the fascist and racist threat.

The need for workers' and popular committees or councils to form workers' defence squads and workers' militias is urgent to fight capitalist sabotage, the fascist gangs, and the threat of a military coup.

The key is the self-organisation of the masses. This should be linked with the revitalisation and creation of neighbourhood communities of solidarity, social kitchens, and community exchange of goods and services, as counterposed to the fascist thugs' persecution of immigrants and "other undesirables".

Who are the Greek left?

By Colin Foster

On the Greek the Syriza coalition and the KKE are the biggest groups, but there are many others. This briefing describes the background to Syriza and KKE, and to some of the groups in Greece which consider themselves Trotskyist.

SYRIZA

Syriza is an alliance of 13 left parties and groups. The dominant force in it is Synaspismos. It was formed in 2004 (with only five groups in the alliance then).

It campaigns now, and campaigned in the run-up to 6 May, for a left-unity government. After 6 May it proposed six points to other parties after 6 May as conditions for Syriza's participation in a coalition government:

- Reverse all the anti-working-class policies implemented during the last two years — wage and pension reductions and abolition of collective bargaining agreements, union rights etc
- Freeze all debt payments. A moratorium on the debt for at least three years.
- Nationalisation of the banks under workers' control.
- Elect a committee to examine and assess the Greek debt and write off the "illegal" part of the debt
- Introduce proportional representation
- Scrap protection for MPs from being prosecuted for acts of corruption and robbery of public money.

It wants Greece to stay in the EU and eurozone, and argues that defiant rejection of the cuts imposed on Greece by the EU, ECB, and IMF can force the EU leaders to back down.



SYNASPISMOS

Synaspismos essentially comes out of the "Interior" ("Eurocommunist") faction of the old Communist Party of Greece, KKE.

In 1987 the two factions of the KKE formed an electoral coalition under the name Synaspismos. In 1989-90 Synaspismos joined a coalition government with New Democracy (Tories), theoretically on a short-term mandate to clean up corruption.

Most Synaspismos members and leaders came to think that the coalition was a bad move. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 led to KKE-Exterior quitting the Synaspismos coalition, and the remainder of Synaspismos converting itself from a coalition to a party.

"Eurocommunism" was a trend in many Communist Parties in the 1970s to distance themselves from the USSR and Stalinism and to open up to movements like feminism.

In Britain the "Eurocommunists" soon became, essentially, right-wing Labourites or liberals with a top-coating of Marxist jargon. In some countries, including Greece, the "Eurocommunists" were more left-wing.

The KKE-Interior was so called because led by those "inside" Greece (rather than in exile) under the military dictatorship of 1967-74.

Some of the old "Eurocommunist" leaders, such as Fotis Kouvelis, split off from Synaspismos in June 2010 to form the Democratic Left. Most Synaspismos members today have joined since the days of "Eurocommunism".

The Synaspismos youth movement is more left-wing than the older members, and among the older members too there are several different shades of politics.

COMMUNIST PARTY (KKE)

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) is the oldest political party in Greece, and has much deeper roots in Greek working-class history than Pasok (founded only in 1974, and without the organic links with trade unions which the Labour Party has in Britain).

This makes the landscape of the left in Greece very different from in Britain.

KKE was founded in 1918, when the workers' revolution in Russia inspired a number of small socialist groups to join together and many workers to join them.

The first general secretary of the KKE, Pantelis Pouliopoulos, and others, stayed loyal to revolutionary Marxism and became Trotskyists, but the majority of the KKE became Stalinist.



inised.

Between 1941 and 1944 the KKE played a big role in the armed resistance to the Nazi occupation of Greece. A civil war followed, between 1946 and 1949, between KKE-led forces and the forces of the monarchy, backed by British troops and the USA.

The KKE of today is the diehard-Stalinist remnant of the old KKE, after the splintering-way of "Eurocommunist" currents which have flowed into Syriza and of Maoist groups.

It proposes a "popular government" which will "disengage from the EU" and overthrow "the monopolies" at some time in the future, but all large measures have to wait for that distant future. For now it has no answers but to strengthen the KKE so that it can pursue "the path of rupture, conflict, [which] requires sacrifices".

The KKE is diehard-Stalinist, and publicly mourned North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il.

XEKINIMA

Xekinima was in Syriza between 2008 and 2011. It quit last year but called for a vote for Syriza or other left parties on 6 May, and backed Syriza's call for a united left government.

"Xekinima urges Syriza to make a bold call to the rank and file of the KKE and other left forces to join in an electoral bloc on an anti-austerity platform and to fight for a majority left government with a socialist programme".

The tag "with a socialist programme" reflects Xekinima's links with the Socialist Party in England, which for a long time summed up its aim as "Labour to power with a socialist programme", as if a full socialist programme were something that could be achieved by nudging along Labour (or Syriza).

Xekinima's attitude to Europe is, however, very different from the "No2EU" Socialist Party's.

"While the vast majority of Greeks vociferously oppose the austerity programme they also want to remain in the eurozone.

"They understandably fear the aftermath of exiting the common currency".

DEA

DEA is a group within Syriza which sees itself as part of the same "tradition" as the SWP in Britain.

Its international links are, however, not with the SWP, but with the ISO in the USA, which the SWP expelled from its international network in an obscure dispute in 2001, and with Socialist Alternative in Australia.

DEA commented on the 6 May election: "we commit ourselves once again to doing anything we can to keep Syriza moving in a radical left-wing direction..."

It further explains: "In the Syriza alliance, we are trying to organise around the slogan: 'Not a single sacrifice for the euro, no illusions in the drachma'. Our goal is a left-wing policy that confronts the vulgar 'Europeanism' which legitimises austerity policies today, but without taking responsibility for raising a call for an immediate return to the drachma..."

"If [a return to the drachma] does happen under the current constellation of social and political forces, the results will be bitter for the Greek people..."

KOKKINO

Kokkino is a splinter from DEA, also within Syriza. It appears more ecumenical than DEA.

It declares that a left government will "face a coordinated attack from the markets" and should respond with measures like "stopping payments, nationalisation with compensation of banks and key sectors of the economy, control of trade and capital flows... The key is to organise a wide support network for a left government by the organisation and mobilisation of its social base".

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

The Democratic Left is a split from Synaspismos in 2011.

Although it voted against the second EU/ ECB/ IMF "memorandum", in negotiations after 6 May it indicated it would cooperate in a government carrying through the "memorandum".

ANTARSYA, SEK, SPARTAKOS

Antarsya is a coalition of ten left groups including two Trotskyist currents, the SEK and OKDE-Spartakos, Maoist groups, and splinters from the KKE tradition.

It got 1.2% of the vote in the 6 May election, with the slogan "Bread, Education, Freedom" (clunkily adapted from the Bolsheviks' "Bread, Land, and Peace" in 1917: the Bolsheviks also pushed less bland demands for workers' control, for the organisation of the working class, for Red Guards, and for power to workers' councils).

The vote was more than in 2009, but has disappointed Antarsya activists and led to some debate between them.

DEA criticises Antarsya as follows: "Antarsya... adopted the slogan 'an anti-capitalist exit from the euro'. This formulation isn't honest... If we are talking about an anti-capitalist overthrow of the existing system and the new system that would emerge from this, then a slogan about currency isn't the best place to start... For most of the comrades of Antarsya, the way to resolve the contradiction in their everyday political activity is to forget about the adjective 'anti-capitalist' and speak only about an exit from the euro, pure and simple..."

SEK, however, praises this position of Antarsya for bringing EU withdrawal into immediate left politics. The KKE is very anti-EU, but talks about Greek withdrawal from the EU as something which should happen only with a "popular" (KKE-backed) government already in power in Greece, not now.

SEK does not oppose the call for a united left government, but stresses the "limits" and sees the answer in more militancy in workplaces.

SEK is the group "officially" linked to the SWP in Britain. OKDE-Spartakos is linked with the "Mandelite" current represented by such organisations as the NPA in France. (There is a tiny affiliate of this current in Britain, called Socialist Resistance).

Spartakos suggests that the left should give "extra-parliamentary support or votes in parliament to all measures of a leftist government that break with the politics of capital", but emphasises struggle for "workers' control and workers' self-management".

EEK, OKDE

There are two main Trotskyist groups which stood in the 6 May elections against both Syriza and Antarsya.

EEK (which got 0.08%) was historically linked to the "Healyite" SLL/ WRP in Britain, which was the biggest and most visible revolutionary left group in Britain in the 1960s and early 70s. EEK stuck with the WRP even after it went crazy (from about 1968) and then (from 1976) took money from the Libyan and Iraqi governments to sustain itself, and in return praised those tyrannies. In 1987 Healy expelled the EEK because it would not go along with his applause for Gorbachev. EEK is now linked not with other ex-Healyite groups but with Politica Obrera in Argentina. It declares:

"Elections will not provide the solution, the solution lies in the immediate organisation and victorious conduct of an indefinite General Political Strike that will last until the fall of the Papademos government and its potential successors... a red socialist Greece in a red socialist Europe".

OKDE (which got 0.02%) is the result of a split from OKDE-Spartakos by young activists who saw the whole "Mandelite" current as drifting into soft, flabby politics. The OKDE comrades are open and keen to discuss, and AWL has attended meetings with them and carried comment from them in *Solidarity*.

OKDE's view on the EU is different from ours. OKDE distinguishes itself on the Greek left by raging against the EU as "the anti-worker headquarters, the prison of peoples".

OKDE calls for a revolutionary party and a socialist revolution, but also for a Constituent Assembly.



KKE-ML, ML-KKE

There are many Maoist groups in Greece, offshoots of the strength of the KKE tradition.

Two of them, KKE-ML and ML-KKE, have formed an electoral alliance focused on "the struggle of our people for leaving the EU and NATO and to overthrow the domination of imperialism".

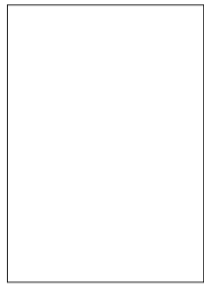
It won 0.25% on 6 May.

Ideas for Freedom: Friday 29 June to Sunday 1 July 2012

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Ideas for Freedom is Workers' Liberty's annual weekend of socialist education, discussion and debate. It is an opportunity for members and sympathisers of our organisation, and others interested in class-struggle, revolutionary ideas, to learn from each other in an environment which is simultaneously politically sharp, thoughtful, welcoming and accessible.

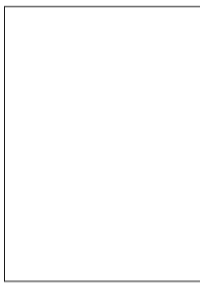
It opens on Friday evening at the Exmouth Arms (London NW1 1HR), and continues on Saturday and Sunday at Highgate Newtown Community Centre, 25 Bertram St, London N19 5DQ, near Archway.



Owen Jones



Alex Phillips



Rosie Woods

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Capitalism is increasingly unpopular, but socialist ideas are weak and marginal. How can we change that? And what does socialism mean after the experience of social democracy and Stalinism?

The Saturday of Ideas for Freedom will open with a panel on "How do we make socialism a force again?", with speakers including author and journalist **Owen Jones**, French New Anticapitalist Party activist **Antonin**, Green party councillor **Alex Phillips** and **Rosie Woods** from Workers' Liberty.

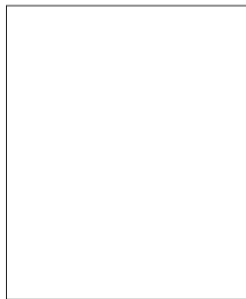
And on Sunday, **Elaine Jones** will debate ex-Workers Power member **Luke Cooper** from the new "Anti-Capitalist Initiative" (ACI) on "What kind of anticapitalist organisation do we need?" The ACI is led by people who split from the Trotskyist group Workers Power.

CLASS STRUGGLE IS THE KEY

Our understanding of capitalism and anti-capitalism has working-class struggle at its centre.

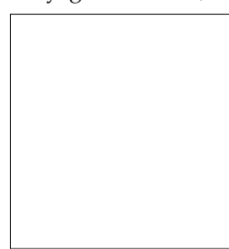
How can we develop workers' organisation and confidence to meet the huge challenges posed by the crisis and the massive assault on our living standards and rights being pushed through by the ruling class?

Ideas for Freedom will open on Friday night with a discussion celebrating the stormy workers' struggles of 1972, which prepared the way for the fall of Edward Heath's Tory government, and seeking to



Pete Radcliff

learn the lessons for today. **Pete Radcliff**, who took part in the successful mass picket at Saltley Gate, where miners, engineering workers and other trade unionists confronted the police to picket the West Midlands Gas Board coking works in Saltley, will explain what that struggle and the labour movement of the early 70s were like.



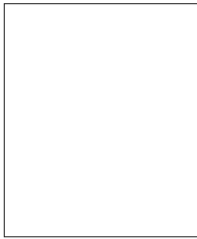
Patrick Murphy

Other speakers will include **Jean Lane**, the Unison rep who led the recent victorious anti-cuts dispute at Central Foundation Girls School in East London (see back page and page 10 of this paper), and an activist from recent successful anti-victimisation struggles on London Underground.

Over the weekend **Pat Murphy**, a member of the National Union of Teachers national executive, and tube worker and RMT activist **Becky Crocker** will look at the National Minority Movement of the 1920s and discuss the lessons for building rank-and-file movements in the unions today.

As part of our Introduction to Marxism series, **Janine Booth**, who represents London Transport

Becky Crocker



Janine Booth



Hannah Thompson

Ed Maltby

workers on the RMT national executive, and Unison member **Hannah Thompson** will discuss Marxists' understanding of and involvement in trade unions.

The Saturday night social will feature a film showing and speaker from the victorious mechanical and electrical construction workers' dispute against pay cuts, British workers' most important victory since the capitalist crisis began.

CRISIS ACROSS EUROPE

Europe is now at the centre of the world capitalist crisis. Ideas for Freedom will feature socialists from a number of European countries on what our understanding of and response to the crisis should be.

Antonin, an activist in the L'Etincelle (Spark) tendency of France's New Anticapitalist Party, will join our panel on a discussion about the European left with others including Irish Labour Youth's **Neil Warner**. Greek socialist **Theodora Polenta** and Workers' Liberty's **Ed Maltby** will just have returned from Greece and will lead the discussion on the issues facing revolutionaries there.

Economists **John Grahl** (Euro-memo) and **Jo Michell** (Research on Money and Finance) will discuss the eurozone crisis with **Martin Thomas** from Workers' Liberty.

Roma activist **Toma Nikolaev** and **Dan Barron** from Traveller Solidarity will report on the alarming threats facing Roma and traveller communities across Europe.

MARXIST THEORY

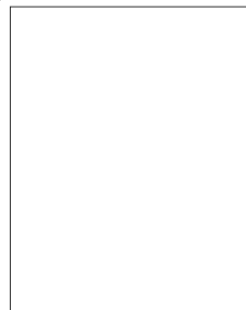
As in recent years, this year's IFF will feature a series of "Introduction to Marxism" workshops for new and young comrades.

Alice Marshall and **Liam Conway** will be asking "What is capitalism?", looking at how socialists understand capitalism and how we think it can be replaced. **Janine Booth** and **Hannah Thompson** will discuss "Marxism and trade unions". **Liam McNulty** and

Liam McNulty

Sarah Weston will be asking "Why is the left so divided?" And **Alison Brown** and **Daniel Lemberger Cooper** will lead a discussion on the neglected question of what a socialist society would actually be like.

The event will also include discussions on "Is Marxism Eurocentric?", led by **Paul Hampton** and **Camila Bassi** from Workers' Liberty, and on the lessons of the Falklands War for Marxists dealing with conflicts today, looking at what the socialist left said about the issue at the time.



Camila Bassi

OTHER SESSIONS

Other sessions will include:

- Music journalist and author **Dorian Lynskey**, writer of the successful book *33 Revolutions Per Minute*, and hip-hop artist **The Ruby Kid** on protest songs past and present.

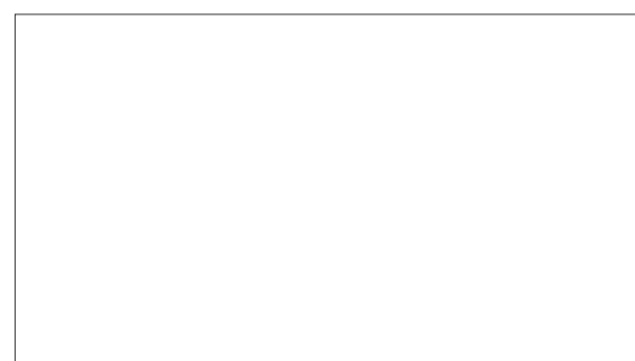
- **Women Against Pit Closures**, the working-class women's organisation that was crucial to building solidarity in the 1984/5 miners' strike, as well as fighting for



Dorian Lynskey



Professor Colin Schindler



Key struggles of the past year. From top: electricians fight pay cuts, mass strikes against pension reforms, the "Occupy London" protest.

women's rights within working-class communities and the labour movement, on women in struggle against capitalism.

- **Amin Kazemi** from the Iranian Revolutionary Marxist Tendency and **Cathy Nugent** from Workers' Liberty on workers' struggles in Iran and the possibility of war.

- Workers' Liberty's **Sacha Ismail** debates NUS executive member and National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts leader **Michael Chessum** on whether the left should "Boycott Israel".

- **Professor Colin Schindler**, journalist **Dave Osler**, and **Tom Unterrainer** of Workers' Liberty on the left and anti-semitism.

- **Jill Mountford** of Workers' Liberty and Health Alarm and **Dr Jacky Davis** of the NHS Consultants' Association will discuss the NHS.

- In the Royal Jubilee year, **John Moloney** of Workers' Liberty discusses the English civil war and revolution, which led to Britain becoming a republic in 1649.

There will be free accommodation, a free crèche and cheap food available. If you want to book accommodation or a crèche place in advance, get in touch. awl@workersliberty.org or 07796 690 874

Weekend tickets bought before the end of May are £24 **Michael Chessum** waged, £16 low-waged/HE students, £6 unwaged/FE/school students. Tickets bought in advance at £26/£17/£6, and tickets bought on the door are £28/£18/£6. Day tickets and single-session tickets will also be available.

- Facebook: Ideas for Freedom 2012
- Twitter: @workersliberty
- Web (including online bookings): workersliberty.org/ideas

How solidarity won school cuts fight

By Fran Burrows

New head teachers in a school always want to stamp their authority by making a few changes. The new head at Central Foundation Girls School, in Bow, East London, went a few steps too far.

Under her “leadership”, the sickness policy changed to trigger procedures against absentee staff after four days (previously eleven). Support staff became subject to a new evaluation process. Observations of teachers increased. Data entry went through the roof. Not surprisingly, morale hit rock bottom.

This was the backdrop to the announcement, in December 2011, of a restructure, affecting both teachers and support staff, and involving 13 redundancies. Several support workers were going to have their all-year-round contracts altered to term-time-only, causing a huge drop in pay. It was also proposed to increase teacher workload by giving them an extra 50 minutes a week in class, breaking National Union of Teachers (NUT) guidelines for an 80-20 ratio of contact time to non-classroom work.

Unison, the union organising support staff in the school, and the NUT immediately set about organising ballots for strike action. The Unison dispute was about compulsory redundancies and cuts in pay. The NUT’s focused on compulsory redundancies and increased workload.

SHAKY

Because of the low morale, the start of the fightback was shaky. At a staff meeting, the head told everyone that striking was a waste of time because there was nothing that could be done about the restructure, and denied the union reps a chance to reply.

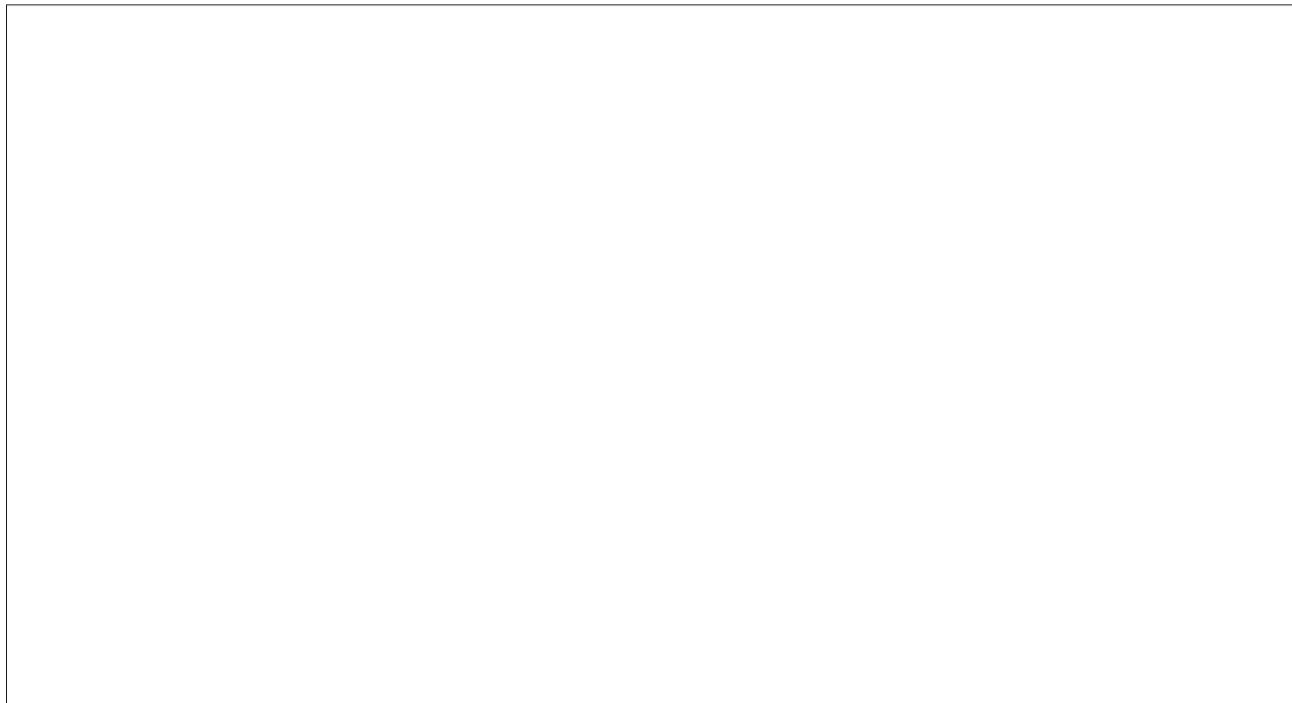
Her own intransigence and unreasonableness made staff begin to stir. Up until then, many had believed the head was behaving in a transparent and reasonable way. Her actions at the staff meeting proved she was not.

At a second whole staff meeting, the head attempted to drive a wedge between the two unions by running down Unison’s handling of the job re-evaluation process at the same time as again refusing the chance to respond. The Unison rep made an impassioned plea to members of both unions to attend union meetings, where workers could discuss a response to the cuts in their own terms. Sure enough, the next two union meetings were packed.

The demands of the fightback were: no compulsory redundancies; no pay cuts; no increased workload. The two unions met together from then on, produced joint strike bulletins, and discussed joint responses at every turn.

The headquarters of both Unison and the NUT sanctioned strike ballots and when they returned a yes vote, two dates were set; 24 April and 11 May. The exams period was just about to begin, and the unions agreed that they would attempt to minimise disruption to the students to whom the staff devote their working lives. That meant implementing union control of the exam processes, whereby teachers could apply to the joint union reps for permission to run particular exams or revision classes.

The evening before the first strike day, several members of staff met to make banners and placards. The next morning, torrential rain prevented them being put up at the school gates (they had been made with water based paint) but there were still over 70 people on the picket lines. A mass meeting later in the morning, held in a packed hall, set up a strike committee, discussed how the strike funds would be



Workers at Central Foundation Girls’ School in East London have beaten management’s cuts plan. For more on their successful dispute, see back page. Above: CFGS picket line from the strike on Friday 11 May.

used, and voted to go ahead with the next strike.

Morale in the school was going up as people began to take control of the fightback against this vicious attack on their working lives. Staff were smiling at each other in the corridors, thanking and congratulating each other, and even stopping for the occasional hug. The difference from a few weeks before was palpable.

Up until this point the head had insisted that this was *her* school, *her* staff, and *her* decisions. Then the local authority stepped in, and called the head and governors to a meeting with the unions to broker a deal.

DIVIDE

There was a second attempt to create a divide between support and teaching staff. The compulsory redundancies were dealt with by ensuring that those who wished to go would be able to do so at a time that suited them, and those who did not would be offered redeployment.

The cut to support staff pay was withdrawn. A compromise was offered on the teacher workload — that the extra teaching time would only affect those members of staff who had additional, paid, “Teaching and Learning Responsibilities” (TLRs). It was felt that, since the NUT were now isolated, they would accept the deal.

At a huge joint meeting, Unison members voted to accept their offer, as both of the demands most immediately affecting Unison members had been conceded by school management. The teachers voted to reject the offer made to them. All staff then had to vote on whether to go ahead with the second planned strike on 11 May. The teachers voted to carry on with the strike, and Unison members refused to be split from their NUT colleagues and voted not to cross the picket lines.

The second strike day went ahead with better weather and another mass meeting. Teachers spoke emotionally about the workload issue. The national press had just pub-

lished comments from Sir Michael Wilshaw, the head of OFSTED, in which he claimed that teachers didn’t know what stress really was, and that being a head teacher dealing with industrial action by staff was “real” stress! Two more days of action were set for the 13 and 14 June, and Unison members again voted not cross teachers’ picket lines.

The teachers suggested a compromise on the workload issue. They would agree to 50 minutes a fortnight across the board, but only if the management conceded on a whole raft of other issues that had been increasing teachers’ workload and wearing down morale since the new head’s regime began.

They demanded an agreement that observations would only take place at at least five days’ notice, and be only for a specific lesson. They demanded a reduction in the amount of data entry required, and changes to the marking system. They also demanded the withdrawal of the hated sick leave policy, and a guarantee that any future changes would have to be properly negotiated through the unions. If management agreed to these demands, it would represent the reclaiming of significant ground by workers in the school.

The local authority stepped in again and, in the next round of negotiations, management caved. All the teachers’ demands were met. There was a half-hearted attempt by the school’s chair of governors to get the union negotiators to withdraw further strike action there and then, but the unions refused, saying that this was for members to decide.

At a further joint union meeting two days later, the final deal was accepted and the strike called off — but not before workers voted to maintain the strike committee as a permanent joint union committee.

Workers have taken a big step forward in Central Foundation Girls’ School, and their committee — buoyed by victory in this fight — can be a platform for pressing that advantage.

John Carlos: “It’s about being a freedom fighter”

By Sacha Ismail

Seven or eight hundred people attended the 21 May public meeting organised by the rail workers’ union RMT and the firefighters’ union FBU to hear legendary John Carlos, one of the black athletes who raised his fist at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics in protest against racism.

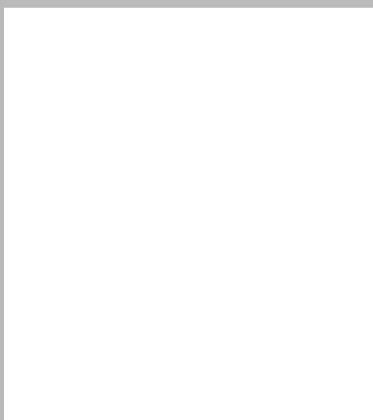
Other equally inspiring speakers from anti-racist struggles in Britain, and trade unionists, also spoke, bringing the whole room to its feet again and again for standing ovations.

The audience had a wide age range and — fairly unusually for a left/labour movement-organised meeting — was ethnically very mixed ethnically, with many Asian and many more black people attending.

Other speakers were representatives of campaigns against police racism, violence and murder — including Doreen Lawrence, Janet Alder and Samantha Rigg-David.

The facts, including the fact that not a single police officer has been convicted for any of the many hundreds of deaths in police custody, were not new, but they still do not fail to shock. Equally the stories of family, friends and activists who have refused to give up in the face of enormous obstacles could not fail to inspire.

John Carlos is an excellent public speaker, touching and funny with a lively, memorable style and turn of phrase. He



was not very clear politically and does not seem to be a socialist in any spelled-out way, but his message was radical and humanist. “It’s not about black versus white,” he told the audience to cheers. “It’s about right versus wrong.”

And it was an appeal to sports people to abandon a supposedly apolitical stance — “My life wasn’t about winning medals. It was about being a freedom fighter” — and to young people to get involved and renew the radical movement.

The meeting unanimously agreed to launch a campaign for an inquiry into police cover ups and corruption.

It was good that the meeting was explicitly a trade union meeting, organised by two left-wing unions, the RMT and FBU.

This was an excellent initiative which showed the labour movement in a good light.

• More on the 1968 protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos (left) — bit.ly/JkGDM1

Train drivers in pensions battle

By a train driver

Train drivers working for East Midlands Trains (EMT) have taken 6 days of strike action in the past 3 weeks to try and prevent the company from reducing contributions to their pension fund.

In 2010 an actuarial valuation revealed a funding level of 99.1% and a prediction that if the Joint Contribution Rate (the money paid into the fund by management and workers) stayed the same, then the fund would probably move into surplus.

With the current finan-

cial turmoil, drivers are rightly concerned that any reduction now will leave a deficit in 2013. The company has been asked to provide an interim valuation to confirm that the fund is in surplus now but has refused. In other companies where recent valuations have shown actual surpluses union members have voted to reduce the contributions. EMT has also been unwilling to commit to make up any shortfall if the reduction goes ahead. Drivers are suspicious that, as 2013 is the end of the franchise, EMT are looking to make a fast buck at our expense before they give up or lose

the franchise.

So far, only members of the drivers' union ASLEF have taken action. The other unions organising on EMT, RMT and Unite, are in the process of balloting their members on this

issue. ASLEF will probably wait for the results of those ballots before deciding what to do next. If the other unions vote for action (and this could be a proxy for all the other issues we currently have with the company including victimisation of reps, pay, rosters and the car park levy), it will be difficult for EMT to maintain their strike day skeleton service if different grades strike on different days. It would be feasible for instance that the drivers could strike one day, other train crew the following day and platform staff the day after that. Coupled with a possible week long

strike by train maintainers, which would see trains gradually becoming unfit for service, there is a good chance we could win this one quickly. If we don't get the results, ASLEF could call token strikes to keep the ballot live and then have another push during the Olympics, which would give the dispute national publicity.

As we are always being told to save more for our pensions, the company would be shown up to be the pension raiders that they are, and we can rightly portray ourselves as the responsible party trying to maintain them.

London bus workers ballot for Olympics strike

By Darren Bedford

A strike ballot of London bus workers is underway as transport workers' campaigns for decent Olympic working arrangements continue.

The Unite union is balloting its 21,000 members across London's bus services for a strike. The union is demanding a £500 flat-rate Olympics bonus for the workers, who are employed by 21 separate service providers. Unlike other transport providers,

the bus companies have so far refused to award bonuses for the extra workload their employees will face during the Olympic Games. 800,000 extra people could travel on the buses during the period of the Games.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), which represents workers on the London Underground, has already secured bonuses for its members at several companies, including London Overground and Docklands Light Railway. Its

campaign to secure a no-strings bonus for its members employed by London Underground Ltd. has been undermined by the drivers-only unions ASLEF, which signed an agreement for a £500 bonus conditional on various breaches of the existing collective agreement which regulates working conditions.

RMT's campaign to win a bonus that does not require workers to sacrifice their hard-won terms and conditions continues.

"Workfare" comes into hospitals

By Ollie Moore

The latest manifestation of the government's "workfare" schemes sees not only job-seekers being exploited, but also hospital patients put at risk.

Sandwell and West Birmingham hospital trust has piloted a scheme whereby unemployed people worked, unpaid, for six weeks, cleaning wards and helping to feed patients. They were given just two weeks of training.

This scheme is not only exploitative to the job-seekers themselves but an insult to NHS workers and

a risk to patient safety.

Union representatives at the trust's hospitals said that they had been consulted about the scheme and has consented, but only if the participants were not involved in direct patient care.

That they consented at all is a worrying sign; trade union activists must fight to ensure that the labour movement takes a firm line against "workfare" schemes and fights to decent unemployment benefits for all who need them, and a shorter working week (with no loss of pay) to create jobs.

Privatisation threat at Sussex Uni

By Clarke Benitez

Students and workers at the University of Sussex will protest the visit of potential private investors to their campus, as the university attempts to privatise its catering, estates and facilities services.

Over 200 workers face outsourcing to private employers, more than 10% of the workforce. A protest on Thursday 24 May follows a similar action on Tuesday 22 May, held to coincide

with visits by private service providers preparing bids to run the outsourced contracts.

A joint campaign involving Unite, Unison, academics' union UCU, and the Students Union has held meetings and is running a petition against the privatisation.

Maureen Winder, the branch secretary of the Unison branch on campus, said: "If staff become employees of a private company their future pension rights and working condi-

tions will change significantly, and we will have a two-tier workforce, as new staff will be employed on different terms and conditions. The plans were sprung upon us with no discussion about finding solutions in-house.

"The university seems determined to outsource regardless of the impact on quality or future costs, and this is devastating for the whole University community."

• Petition against privatisation — bit.ly/JgXdMZ

Greenwich library workers win

By Darren Bedford

Greenwich library workers will retain their local authority contract terms after a strike against potential cuts, related to transfer to a private-sector employer, succeeded.

The workers, who are members of Unite, struck in April, closing 11 of the 13 libraries facing transfer

to Greenwich Leisure Ltd. Although GLL will still take ownership of the libraries, bosses have guaranteed the protection of terms and conditions beyond the minimal protection offered by "TUPE" legislation (which protects contracts at the point of transfer but allows new employers to change them soon afterwards for "economic, technical, or organisational" reasons).

Unite officer Onay Kasab said: "I am proud of the fact that these workers were prepared to stand up and fight in defence of pay and conditions.

"It is only because they have made clear that they will strike, that these assurances have been won."

New jobs at Ellesmere, but with round-the-clock working?

By Stewart Ward

Car workers at the Ellesmere Port plant of auto industry giant General Motors voted overwhelmingly to accept a

deal that keeps work at the plant until 2020.

The new deal, which brings the production of the new Vauxhall Astra to the plant, will also create 700 new jobs. A further 3,000 jobs could be created in the supply chain.

However, the deal is based on what managers call "groundbreaking"

levels of flexibility and could require workers to work round the clock to meet production targets if necessary.

The deal could also mean job losses at General Motors plants elsewhere in Europe that were also potential sites for the Astra production.

LGBT transport workers discuss solidarity

By Paul Penny

Delegates to this year's LGBT members' conference of the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT, 18 May) debated a range of issues including international LGBT rights, homophobic bullying in UK schools, equal marriage, and the banned advertising campaign on London buses (which aimed to promote the "ex-gay" movement and "conversion therapy").

Delegates also discussed the recent upsurge in religious and state-sponsored homophobia in many regions around the world.

Conference noted with concern that across Africa, parliaments are currently advocating laws that would further penalise and even execute homosexuals.

In Russia, the city of Saint Petersburg has recently passed a law making it illegal to speak in public about homosexuality. In Iraq, sectarian militias are brutally murdering gay men, and young men perceived to be gay.

In Iran, the theocratic regime continues to criminalise and oppress homosexuality. Conference also discussed the work of the charity Diversity Role Models in preventing homophobic bullying in UK schools by educating about differences in sexuality. Delegates passed all of the six resolutions discussed at conference.

Two resolutions from the conference will be sent to the RMT Annual General Meeting (24-29 June). The first resolution calls on the RMT to support campaigns against homophobia around the world, and build international solidarity links with LGBT rights campaigners and trade unionists.

The second resolution calls on the RMT to foster a working relationship with Diversity Role Models and run political campaigns to oppose cuts in funding to anti-bullying initiatives in the UK.

• More on LGBT&Q struggles — bit.ly/KuNqgz

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Joint strikes win in East London school

Joint strikes of support staff and teachers, involving Unison and National Union of Teachers (NUT) members, at Central Foundation Girls School in East London, have forced school management to back down on plans for pay cuts and job losses, and have won victories on teachers' workload, observations, and sickness policy. Read the story of the strike on page 10. Below, a trade union activist in the school explains how the battle was won.

From the moment that both Unison and NUT began their ballots, all meetings, bulletins and decisions were joint. No single action took place unless both unions were in it together.

This ensured that, despite several attempts, management could not drive a wedge between the two unions and divide the staff.

Unison had a high return and a very high "yes" vote in an indicative ballot which is organised in the workplace and is accompanied by discussions in meetings. But the official ballot from regional office had a very poor return.

If both unions had not been involved, Unison region would probably not have sanctioned the action. This would have been wrong. Despite the low ballot return, the strike was solid on both days.

This affirmed for the activists in the school that official postal ballots are not necessarily an indication of willingness to fight and can be used by union leaders to undermine action.

The joint unions meeting agreed that strikers did not intend to disrupt the GCSE examinations. They would, therefore, try to hold strike days when no exams were on. But one or two faculties also said that some of their revision classes badly needed to go ahead.

It was agreed that those faculties should approach the strike committee rather than school management for sanction to go in on a strike day. They would sign in on the picket line instead of in school, receive no pay, and rejoin the picket line once their session was over.

Because the strike committee had shown this flexibility, both Science and English faculties decided on the day that their revision classes did not need to run after all.

JOINT BULLETIN

From the first whole-staff meeting, when management attempted to stamp their control on the process, the strike committee produced a joint unions strike bulletin.

It came out in particular before whole-staff meetings so that members were armed with the union arguments before management got to speak. This was important, as management

Picket line, Central Foundation Girls School

had attempted to silence the unions.

A strike committee was set up at the first mass meeting on the first strike day. It included people who had never organised or even been on strike before. It ensured that more people than just the elected reps were involved in decision making, and also ensured that messages spread around the school more quickly. It gave the membership ownership of the dispute.

It was also agreed at the end of the dispute that it should continue to exist as a joint unions committee, which would meet once every half term. This will strengthen union organisation in the school and make sure that no-one is isolated.

CLEANERS

The cleaners and caretakers, though Unison members, were not allowed to take part in the dispute as they worked for private company G4S.

They were not happy with this and sent someone to all the union meetings. They gave out tea to the pickets to show their support. They also persuaded

those cleaners not in the union to join.

One cleaner said: "My Dad hates unions. That's why I never joined one. But I need to know that, if I get called on not to cross the picket line, I will get the backing of the union."

Humour was invaluable in this dispute, as a weapon against management's stiff-lipped determination to get their way but also to boost morale.

From early on in the dispute the head teacher received the nickname "The Vogon", the name of characters in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* whose catchphrase was "resistance is futile".

Some members of staff began to hum the Specials' song "Too Much Too Young" when they looked back on all the changes that had been going on in the run-up to the restructure. They reckoned that if the head had done it more slowly she might have got away with it.

The lessons of Thatcher's salami slice tactics were not learned by a head who wanted to show who's boss in a very short space of time.

Abolish the monarchy! Up the republic!

By Ruben Lomas

More than £10 million will come straight out of the public purse to fund the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, along with millions more from private sponsors.

That's money for pompous pageantry to celebrate an accident of birth, and an institution that more civilised countries than ours abolished centuries ago.

Even when they're being rammed down our throat by the media and political establishment, there's a temptation to dismiss the monarchy as an irritating quirk, a relic, but ultimately one that has no real grip on or connection to actual politics.

But the rogues' gallery of despots that came together for the Queen's Jubilee lunch shows how the British monarchy is still part of a network of reaction that includes people engaged in far worse crimes than the odd bigoted gaffe.

Attendees included:

- **Mswati III**, the King of Swaziland who, in 2000, proposed the branding and sterilisation of HIV-positive people as a response to the AIDS epidemic, and who spends tens of millions of dollars on private jets and Maybach cars while "his" people starve.

- **Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz Al Saud** was there, a representative of the monarchy of Saudi Arabia which maintains theocratic gender apartheid.

- **The King of Bahrain** attended, presumably on a day off from overseeing the murderous repression of the pro-democracy movement in that country.

- **The "King of Romania"**, the **"King of Bulgarians"**, and the **"King of the Hellenes"** also came along for the day, even though Romania has been a republic since 1947, Bulgaria since 1946, and Greece since 1973.

The Queen's Jubilee gives political legitimacy and cover not only to "monarchs" whose power and position has been abolished decades ago, but to currently-reigning despots and autocrats whose subjects would love the luxury of dismissing them as irrelevant hangovers from a bygone age.

REPRESSION

The lengths to which the British state is now prepared to go to protect the monarchy, and its self-promoting public celebrations, from criticism was shown last year, when dozens of people were rounded up and arrested in a police operation based on pre-emptive political arrests.

Arrestees included 10 socialists and anarchist republicans, arrested to "prevent a potential breach of their peace" while committing the heinous crime of standing outside a train station... on the day of the Royal Wedding.

They, along with several other arrestees, commence a Judicial Review against the Metropolitan Police on Monday 28 May. If the Review finds the police's actions to have been unlawful, republicans should press their advantage by organising the biggest possible republican presence at the Jubilee celebrations.

The "but-they-bring-in-tourist-money" argument for the continued existence of the monarchy hardly stands up to scrutiny when one looks 20 miles across the Channel to France, whose tourist industry does not appear to have suffered much since its monarchy was abolished for the last time in 1870. People still visit the Palace of Versailles even though it is uninhabited. Although Britain's monarchy has not invoked its powers of royal veto and dismissal since 1975, when its representative in Australia dissolved a Labor Party government, the very existence of those powers — and of the monarchy itself — is an affront to democracy.

The monarchy is a financial drain, a political cover for violent reaction, and a reservoir of immense wealth and power obtained solely through accidents of birth.

Its abolition is not something to be put off until some revolutionary future, but a key democratic demand to be fought for now. We can start on Jubilee weekend.

UK Uncut's "Great British Street Party"

Saturday 26 May, central London

Actions on: ● women ● NHS ●
welfare state ● democracy

www.ukuncut.org.uk/actions/866