

workers power 5

April 2010 ★ Price £1 / €1.50 Issue 344

Monthly magazine of the British section of the League for the Fifth International



VOTE ★ ANTI-CAPITALIST ★ ON 6 MAY

SUPPORT TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST CANDIDATES

- Bankers not workers should pay for the crisis
- No cuts in jobs, pay and pensions
- The strikers are right – it's time to fight

Centre pages:

DRINKALL FOR VAUXHALL
For the millions, *not the millionaires*



REVOLTS AROUND THE WORLD

Thailand: masses battle troops



Thousands have taken to the streets in Thailand demanding fresh elections to overthrow the military-backed Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

In response, Vejjajiva has declared a state of emergency and started a bloody crackdown.

Thai troops are using tanks and live ammunition against the Red Shirt movement

killing 20 and wounding 800 in the capital Bangkok.

Yet the protestors remain on the streets – refusing to succumb to the brute force of the army. The revolt has spread from Bangkok into the regions with Red Shirts seizing provincial halls around the country.

• More at www.fifthinternational.org

REVOLUTION IN KYRGYZSTAN



A revolution on the streets of Kyrgyzstan has toppled the unpopular regime of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Bakiyev has fled the capital Bishkek after protesters, some of whom were armed, took control of police stations and government buildings.

People protested against the government because they were angry about the cost of fuel and gas, which has quadrupled in the last few days, as well as the chronic economic problems of the country.

A protest in Bishkek was brutally attacked by the police who fired into the crowd, killing and wounding many people.

Enraged demonstrators fought back, forcing the police off the streets in violent clashes.

GREEK WORKERS FIGHT BACK AGAINST CUTS

During the one-day general strike in February, banners filled the streets of Athens: “Keep Your Hands Off Our Benefits!”, “I am not paying”, “Billions for Capitalism but Nothing for the Workers!” and simply “Rise Up!”

This was the second major national strike in less than a month, and more than two million of Greece’s five million workers backed it. In Athens protesters tried to storm the stock exchange with a banner that said “The rich must pay for the crisis”.

The protests will not stop until the government withdraws its austerity programme - the General Confederation of Labour of Greece (GSEE) is expected to announce a general strike in May after announcements regarding the concrete cuts to the pension system.

• More on page 16



Protesters in Athens spell out “I am not paying”

READ MORE AT WWW.WORKERSPOWER.COM



More news, views and features on UK and national politics
Also go to www.fifthinternational.org

EDITORIAL

DRINKALL FOR VAUXHALL VOTE ANTICAPITALIST

For the millions, not the millionaires

This special issue of Workers Power magazine comes at a very important time.

The UK General Election of 2010 – the closest for many years – takes place against the backdrop of a great crisis of the capitalist system.

To stop the banks collapsing, governments all over the world pumped in trillions that they borrowed on the bond markets. Now these governments – who act for the millionaires, not the millions – want to pay that money back, by cutting jobs, pay, pensions and services that people depend on.

In the UK, all three of the main parties back that plan. They all say after the election there will be vicious cuts.

Tory David Cameron wants to cut another 40,000 jobs just to save the bosses from paying an extra penny in National Insurance. Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg says he wants “savage” cuts to services. And Labour’s Alistair Darling warns of cuts “tougher than Margaret Thatcher’s”.

All the mainstream newspapers back that too. Owned by millionaires, they act as mouthpieces for the rich.

Listening to Labour, Tory and Lib-Dem politicians, or reading the Sun, the Mail and the Mirror, you would have thought there was no alternative to cuts.

If only there were a political party in this country that stood for the millions and not the millionaires. If only we had a voice of our own, a MPs of our own, a newspaper of our own.

Then the simple argument would resound across the country. Every time Labour, Tory or Lib Dems said working class people will have to pay for the crisis, the answer would come loud and clear: “No, we won’t – the bosses caused the crisis, they should pay, not us.”

That is what Workers Power is trying to do. That is why we are standing Jeremy Drinkall in the south London constituency of Vauxhall in this election. And it is why we produce this paper.

We know we are only making a beginning. Our paper, as you can see, has no expensive printing press, no army of paid reporters and definitely no millionaire backers! It is produced by working class people in our free time, doing the best we can to answer the capitalists’ lies and stand up for our class.

Our challenge in the election is also a small start. There are about 40 trade unionist and socialist candidates standing in the election. Many of them are standing under the umbrella of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, backed by RMT transport union leader Bob Crow, and by many socialist organisations. They include many fine fighters

for the working class, like healthworker Karen Reissmann who is standing in Manchester Gorton, and youth worker David Henry who is standing in Salford and Eccles. We call on our readers to give them full support.

From this initiative, we hope the appeal will go out for a big national conference after the election. This should aim to rally all the unions who are outside the Labour party – like the RMT – and also unions who find themselves in struggle like the BA cabin crew, AA workers, college workers and many more.

It could bring together all the candidates, all the campaigners, and all the strikers and trade unionists who want to see an alternative. It could set up local committees, a national meeting and found a new anticapitalist party for the working class, with a programme to make the capitalists pay for their crisis, and to get rid of the capitalist system which causes crises, unemployment and cuts in the first place.

That’s what Workers Power exists to campaign for. It’s why we aim to produce a bigger and better newspaper later this year and sell it all over the country. If you agree, contact us and join us.

Contact 0207 708 4331 or email
workerspower@btopenworld.com

**WORKERS’
GUIDE TO
ELECTION
2010**

Turn to pages 4, 5
6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13

DRINKALL FOR VAUXHALL

Anticapitalist candidate Jeremy Drinkall
in the general election. Read his manifesto

**FOR THE MILLIONS,
NOT THE
MILLIONAIRES**

at <http://drinkall4vauxhall.blogspot.com/>



Published and promoted
by Vauxhall
**ANTICAPITALISTS –
WORKERS POWER**
on behalf of Jeremy
Drinkall both at Unit 256,
99-103 Lomond Grove,
London SE5 7HN
Tel 0207 708 4331
or email
jeremy.drinkall@
gmail.com

WORKERS' GUIDE TO ELECTION 2010

The issues

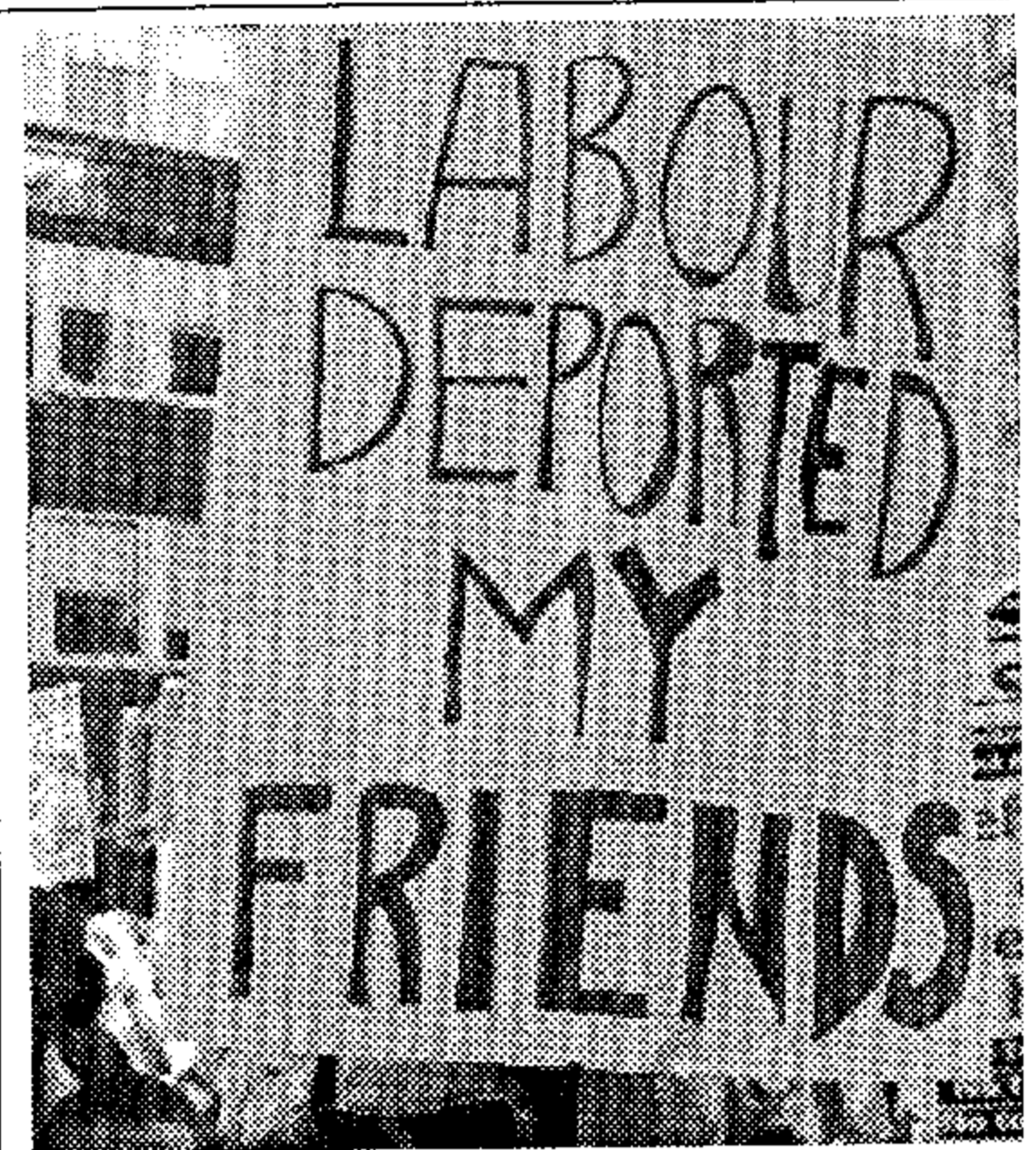
JOBS

THE BOSSES' PARTIES

- All three parties support public sector job cuts
- Tories support immediate recruitment freeze
- Labour wants to wait a year first

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Bankers and bosses caused this crisis, not public sector workers
- Create three million new jobs by taxing the rich to fund a huge programme of public works
- Cut the hours not the jobs; 35-hour week now
- Share out the work with no loss of pay
- Wages to rise 1 per cent for every 1 per cent rise in prices
- Workers' veto over firing and hiring



IMMIGRATION AND RACISM

THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Labour scapegoated asylum seekers, introduced compulsory identity cards for migrants, and want points-based system to cherry-pick skilled migrants
- Tories want annual cap on immigration
- Both parties support increased powers for border force to watch migrant workers

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Don't let the racists divide us
- Don't be turned against migrants
- Citizenship rights for all
- Equal pay for workers; black, white, Asian, migrant
- Let asylum seekers work
- Sack racist police
- Stop the attacks on Muslims
- Mass direct action to shut down the BNP and violent racist groups
- Scrap the immigration controls that fuel racism

BANKS AND ECONOMY

THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Labour bailed out the banks and now want to halve the UK's budget deficit in four years to pay for it
- Tories supported the bail-out, but want to tax inter-bank lending to pay for their discriminatory tax break to married couples



ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Take over the banks without compensation to shareholders; create a single, state bank

- Nationalise the big corporations and firms that declare redundancies under workers' control without compensation
- Fund health, education and housing, not bombs, bullets and war

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

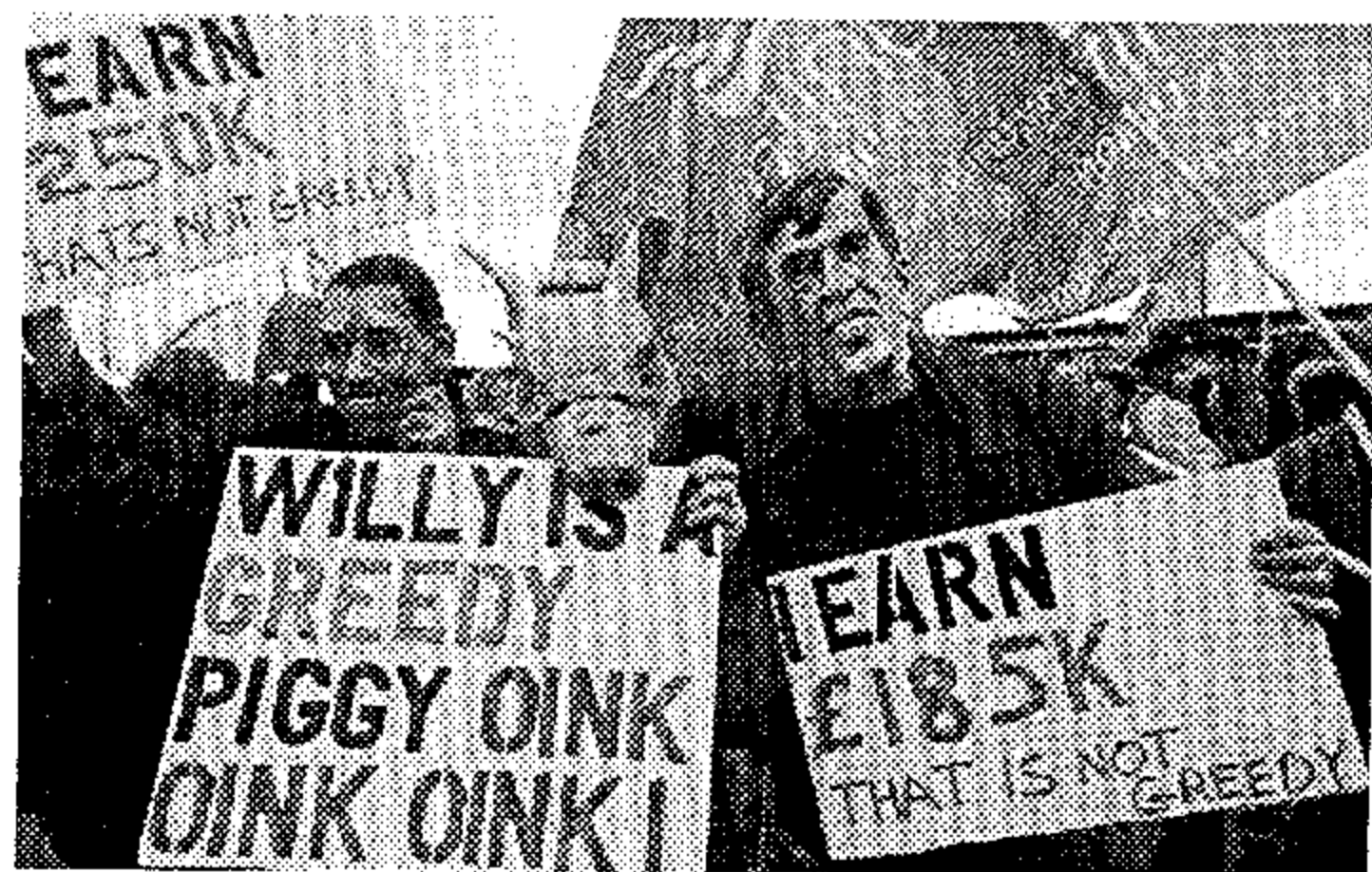


THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Tories will "support commitment" with tax breaks to married couples where only one partner works
- Labour want to fund "two parenting advisers" in every local authority

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Equal pay for work of equal value; level up women's wages to meet the average for men
- Free, 24 hour, community run child care facilities
- Refuges for victims of domestic violence
- Quick and easy divorce on the request of one partner for those trapped in loveless or abusive marriages
- Quality jobs for single mums, without losing housing benefits
- Universal support for low-income families regardless of whether there are two parents, one parents, married or single



STRIKES

THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Labour called on Unite the Union to call off BA cabin crew strike
- Tories called on BA workers to scab on striking workmates

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Support all workers taking strike action to defend jobs, pay, benefits and public services
- Scrap the anti-union laws
- Fight every sacking with strikes and occupations; we can't and won't pay for the crisis of their system

DOLE STREET 13



YOUTH

THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Tories want military-style "national citizen service" for all 16-year-olds
- Labour has launched Youth Community Action scheme for volunteers

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Quality, free education for all; living grants for all students from age 16 and free tuition for higher education
- Decent jobs for all; full union rights and workplace recognition on demand
- Quality training with a living wage for all apprenticeships
- Votes at 16
- Youth centres that offer: sports, recreation, drama, dance, art, music, computing and language courses
- Legalise file sharing - free access to video, music and knowledge
- End stop and search! Youth must be able to live without fear of police brutality

PENSIONS

THE BOSSES' PARTIES SAY

- Tories want to cap public sector pensions and end compulsory annuities at 75
- Labour want to consider abolishing default retirement age
- Both parties want to increase pension age to 66
- Tories want to de-regulate company pension provision
- Labour want to make enrolment into state or company pension schemes compulsory

ANTICAPITALISTS SAY

- Link pensions to average male earnings
- Defend final salary pension schemes
- For free social services and community care to enable the elderly to stay in their own homes, or the alternative of high quality sheltered accommodation
- Automatic and total payment of utility bills: gas, electricity, telephone and internet

UK

WORKERS' GUIDE TO ELECTION 2010

The parties

THE CONSERVATIVES

For the past decade, the Tories have been unelectable – the hated party of big business and the rich. Under Thatcher the 1980s were years of mass unemployment, cutbacks and attacks on workers and youth.

Then David Cameron rolled up on his environmentally-friendly bicycle, claiming the Conservative Party has changed.

In a recent Guardian article, he said: “Labour have become a reactionary force while the Conservatives are today the radicals. Gordon Brown heaps taxes on the poor, blocks plans to improve gender equality, allows rape crisis centres and special schools to shut. He echoes the far right in demanding “British jobs for British workers...”

But have the Tories really changed? Posters proclaim a Cameron government will cut the deficit, not the NHS. But for months the Tories have been pushing for faster and deeper cuts than Labour, backed by right-wing economists and business groups.

Tory plans would add an extra £12 billion of cuts a year onto Labour's proposals.

Tory tax cuts will favour the wealthy: inheritance tax cuts would give £1.2 billion to the richest 2 per cent and ending the 50p top rate of tax would hand over £2.4bn to the richest 1 per cent. To pay for this, Cameron will slash programmes like



Cameron raises two fingers to workers and the poor

the Child Trust Fund, SureStart and state schools.

Cameron says that a Tory government would usher in “a new age of austerity” for public services, slashing civil servants' pay and pensions. He has condemned striking workers, threatening to further restrict the right to strike. A youth volunteering scheme will replace axed public services – real jobs young people could have had. And the new-found “respect” for people of other races, non-Christian religions, gays and civil liberties is just a veil that hides the deep racism and homophobia in the Tory party.

The Tories are not friends of the working class – they remain the deadly enemies of trade unions, the poor and minorities. The Tories are the organised political party of the ruling class and will make the working class pay for the crisis.

LABOUR



Brown and Darling: planning huge cuts

Labour is different from the Tories and Lib Dems in one respect: it backed by all the main trade unions – Unite, GMB and Unison – and a whole host of smaller ones, like Usdaw and the CWU.

In this sense it is a capitalist workers' party: committed to pro-boss policies, but funded and supported by the working class.

Britain's biggest union Unite alone has given the party £11 million over the past three years and has offered a small army of full-time officers to canvas the hundred most important marginal constituencies.

Yet what have workers received for all this? One kick in the teeth after another.

Take the unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example. Britain has spent £18-20 billion in total – not to mention the appalling loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives.

What about council housing? Unbelievably, Labour has only built 2,700 homes in 13 years and continued to give away estates to private housing associations – yet there are 4.5 million people on the waiting list.

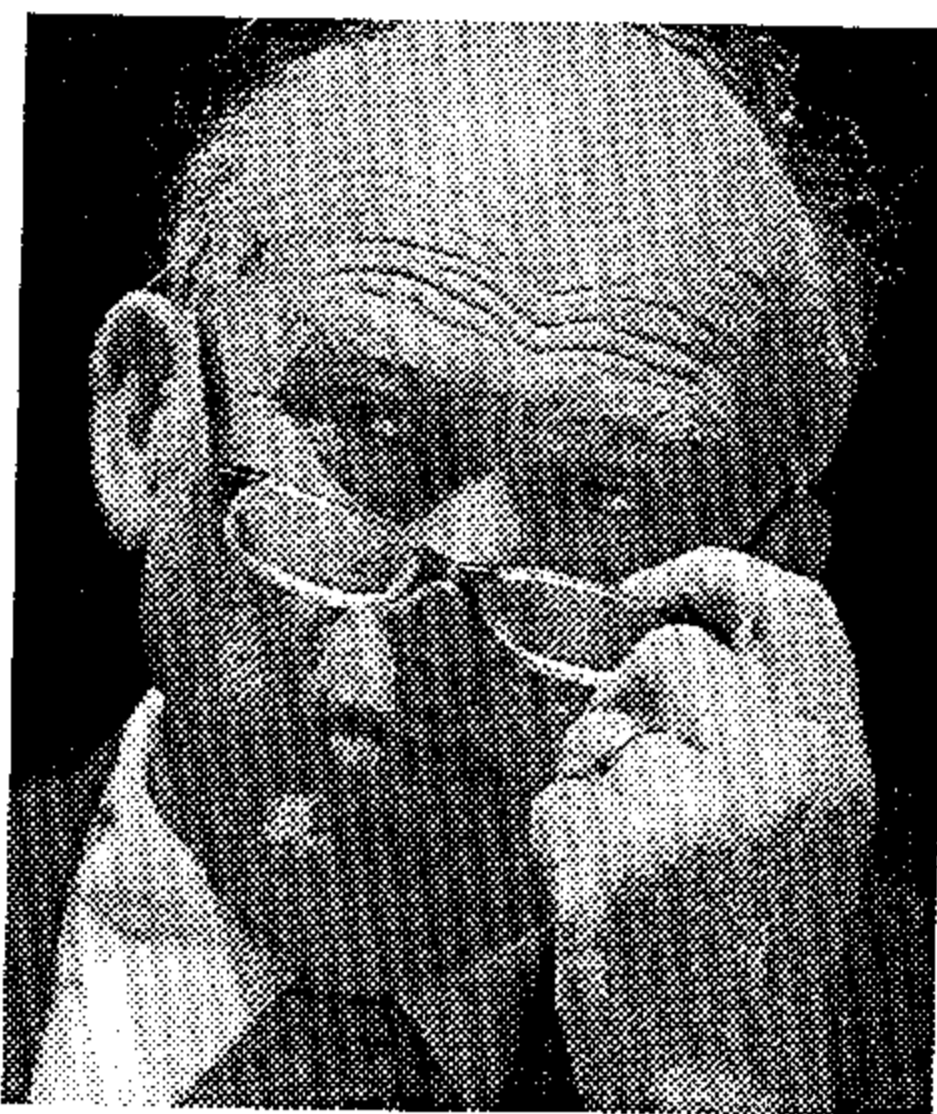
Despite a 4 per cent year-on-year increase in NHS spending, our hospitals have limped from crisis to crisis. Why? Privatisation again: Labour has spent £70 billion on hospitals worth only £13 billion. No wonder we're in debt! Worse, now the primary care trusts are up for grabs, as polyclinics open GP surgeries up to privatisation.

We should demand Labour starts to act in our interests:

- Get the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now
- Build a million new council homes
- Take the rail companies back into public ownership and run them under workers' and passengers' democratic control
- Scrap Academies, school league tables and selection and reduce class sizes
- Nationalise all PFI deals with no compensation to the privateers
- For a massive programme of public works, improving and repairing our public services and spaces – create 3 million new, green jobs.

How could Labour pay for this? By taking back the money they threw at the banks in the credit crunch, nationalising the banks and taxing the rich.

LIB DEMS



Cable wants to slash services

The Lib Dems pose as the nice, reasonable party that sits between Labour and the Tories. Their campaign pledges are about “fairness”: a fair green economy, fair taxes, fair education, and fair and transparent local government.

As the party's Treasury spokesperson Vince Cable put it in a recent debate: “The Liberal Democrats are different. We are not beholden to either the super rich or militant unions.”

The next government could be dependent on the Lib Dems if the election results in a hung parliament.

Yet the Lib Dems have aligned themselves with the other parties on the need for massive cuts. Leader Nick Clegg calls for “austerity for a social purpose”, stating that they will be bold, “or even savage”, on spending. Vince Cable has called for public sector debt to be slashed faster than Labour, with cuts up to £80 billion.

In order to win votes, the Lib Dems promise to maintain current education spending and end unfair bank and airlines charges, but this is small change compared to the big questions – they fully supported the bank bailout and aim to make us pay for it, just like Labour and the Tories.

Now they are trying to defend their middle class vote from the Tories, zigzagging between the two main parties. Strong in local councils, they often enter coalitions with the Tories, for example in Leeds where the Lib Dems led the attempt to smash last year's refuse workers' strike. The Lib Dems is an anti-working class party and not an alternative to Labour.

THE GREEN PARTY

The Greens have benefited from popular anger with Labour, with two MEPs, two London Assembly members, and two MSPs in Scotland.

But the Greens are not a working class alternative: they are a small middle class party that tries to split the difference between the big bosses and the working class.

The party calls for some good things such as more jobs and a higher minimum wage. They say they'll pay for this by raising taxation, but they do this without clearly stating who should pay the extra taxes. Their call for a people's bank sounds fair, but why not fully nationalise the big billionaire banks?

They oppose the worst attacks by big employers against workers – but refuse to back workers when they strike to defend themselves. That's why on the Greater London Assembly, the Greens refused to vote against the Tory motion condemning the tube strikers (they abstained) – and it's why their manifesto calls for compulsory arbitration of public sector disputes, which would ban tubeworkers and others from tak-



Green leader Caroline Lucas: radical words but fails to challenge capitalism

ing effective action.

Like the class of small shopkeepers and well paid professionals they are based on, they are willing to speak out against big business, but they stop short from challenging the market system of capitalism as a whole.

In reality, the Greens' radical policies will be binned if they get in power. In the Irish Republic they back the government's austerity measures. In local government, they are happy to cosy up to the main parties, such as the Leeds Tory-Lib Dem coalition that hiked council tax and cut elderly day centres.

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY

The fascist BNP is standing 236 candidates in the general election, twice as many as in 2005. Since then, the number of BNP councillors has doubled to 57; the party has won a London Assembly member and two MEPs, one of whom is the party's leader Nick Griffin.

The focus of the BNP's election campaign exposes its racist roots – it pledges to stop all immigration. In the past, the party has openly stated that it would force minorities out until the ethnic balance is the same as 1948. But the BNP also puts forward “radical” demands aimed at workers.

It demands the “banksters” pay personally for the crisis, and calls for the nationalisation of utilities. It also calls for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

But far from being a party for workers, the BNP leaders and organisers look down on working class people. A BNP councillor in the Midlands, Simon Smith, said: “White



BNP leader Nick Griffin must be stopped from becoming an MP

working class scum will be swept away by a future BNP government.”

And just like the Tories, the BNP has pledged to raise the inheritance tax threshold to £1 million, which would only benefit the top 3,000 families – including Griffin.

The BNP's real aim is to use racism to build a mass party made up of the unemployed, the middle class, and some racist workers in order to smash trade unions and the

Left. Many BNP activists have been spotted on the anti-Islam riots organised by the English Defence League because they see elections as just one tactic in building a mass party whose goal is to control the streets and terrorise multiracial working class communities.

No worker should vote for the fascist BNP. Instead we need to build a united front of the whole working class movement and drive them back into the gutter – through direct action.

INDUSTRIAL

Workers at AA to strike for first time

Workers at the AA are to take strike action for the first time in the motoring body's 105-year history.

Strikes are planned for the 2 and 3 May. Workers accused managers of treating them with "contempt" over plans to cap annual pension increases to 2.5% and force employees to pay increased contributions.

The Independent Democratic Union, which is organising the strike, said that the AA were cutting workers' pensions by up to half, while the private equity groups that owned the company were still making big profits.

More than half of the AA's 2,400 patrol staff voted to take action on an 87 per cent turnout.

Journalists in local strike vote

Journalists are balloting for the first national strike on regional newspapers for 20 years.

Members of the National Union of Journalists working for Johnston Press newspapers in Blackpool, Sheffield, Scarborough and York are already taking action and now the dispute is going national with NUJ members throughout Johnston Press balloting.

Managers at Johnston Press have given themselves and the shareholders big payouts over the years while the firm has run up huge debts.

Now the company has been told by the banks that it must cut costs in order to service its huge debts.

Managers are forcing through the introduction of a new Atex system to slash jobs and conditions. Workers are in favour of new technology to improve quality, not to cut jobs to boost the profits of bosses and banks.

BA strike: Union funds Labour but Labour kicks workers in the teeth

By Kam Kumar

British Airways cabin crew face an array of enemies. In the forefront is BA boss Willie Walsh who is out to impose a drastic worsening of conditions and to break Unite at Heathrow and Gatwick. He has trained a thousand scabs and a hired a fleet of planes at a huge cost to do so.

Then there are the tabloids running screaming headlines about union bully boys ruining people's holidays. The Sun newspaper described the dispute as a "campaign of industrial terror" and the strikers as the "terrorist wing" of the trade union movement.

The Tories also jumped at the opportunity to put Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the spot – taunting him that he is a "wholly owned subsidiary of the big trade unions." It is true that the Unite leadership has bailed out the Labour Party to the tune of £11 million from their members' political levy.

But it would have been the easiest thing in the world for Gordon Brown to throw back the charge at the Tories: who are the wholly owned subsidiary of the top City bankers and "non dom" multi millionaires like Lord Ashcroft. They have given the Tories an election war chest two to three times the size of Labour's. Did they ballot



their shareholders? No.

But of course Brown made no such come back. Like the coward and bully he is, he turned on the BA cabin crews to prove Cameron wrong. Brown's Transport Secretary, Lord Adonis, called the strike a threat "to the future of one of our great companies in this country. He went on: "Let's be absolutely clear: the stakes are incredibly high in this strike and I absolutely deplore the strike."

They were trying to prove that despite Unite's donations of millions of pounds, it gets no "favours" (i.e. support) from a Labour government.

But the fat cats who fund Cameron get a far better deal for their money. Whenever did you hear a Tory front bench spokesperson denounce management in an industrial dispute?

Clearly Unite should defend a trade union's right to have a political levy. Why should billionaires be

the only ones allowed to fund a political party to defend the interests of their class?

The problem is that Labour does not defend the interests of its millions of working class supporters.

That is why Unite members – and indeed why all Labour affiliated union members – should call at their union conferences this year for a vote to divert their wasted millions from Brown's party into forming a new working class party; one that attacks the capitalists not the workers.

And in the meantime, union members should be pushing for a militant strike to shut down Heathrow and force BA bosses to back down – and if the Unite leaders are too tied to Brown to let it happen, then the best way forward is to start organising a rank and file movement on the slogan: with the union leaders where possible, but without them where necessary!

Civil servants: 'we won't let them axe our redundancy pay'

By Rebecca Allen, PCS Shop Steward, Yorkshire

Civil servants in the PCS trade union have taken three days of strike action to try and stop the government cutting civil servants' redundancy pay so that they can carry out mass sackings on the cheap after the election.

Whoever wins on 6 May, there will be massive public sector cuts unless trade unions can stop it by launching co-ordinated strikes across the country like in Greece.

Many civil servants are low paid.

Whenever we complain, the government says this is because we have a good deal on redundancy pay and pensions. But now they want to slash our redundancy and our pensions are in the firing line.

It's obvious what's going on. They want to cut public services to pay for the economic crisis so they are tearing up our contracts.

If we're going to stop the cuts then we need to co-ordinate our strikes and not limit them to one or two days – we need to be willing to stay out of work until we win and do the fundraising necessary to pay for this.

So far our PCS leaders have failed to stop the jobs massacre and the PCS strike has been delayed until at least the end of April and probably until after the election. Time is slipping away – and so will our jobs if we don't get on with it and start a massive nationwide strike.

If our leaders aren't going to organise it, then ordinary trade union members will have to do it ourselves.

And the election shows we need an anticapitalist party to unite workers in a political challenge to the cuts agenda of all three mainstream parties.

RMT: As judge bans rail strike, time to fight bosses' class law

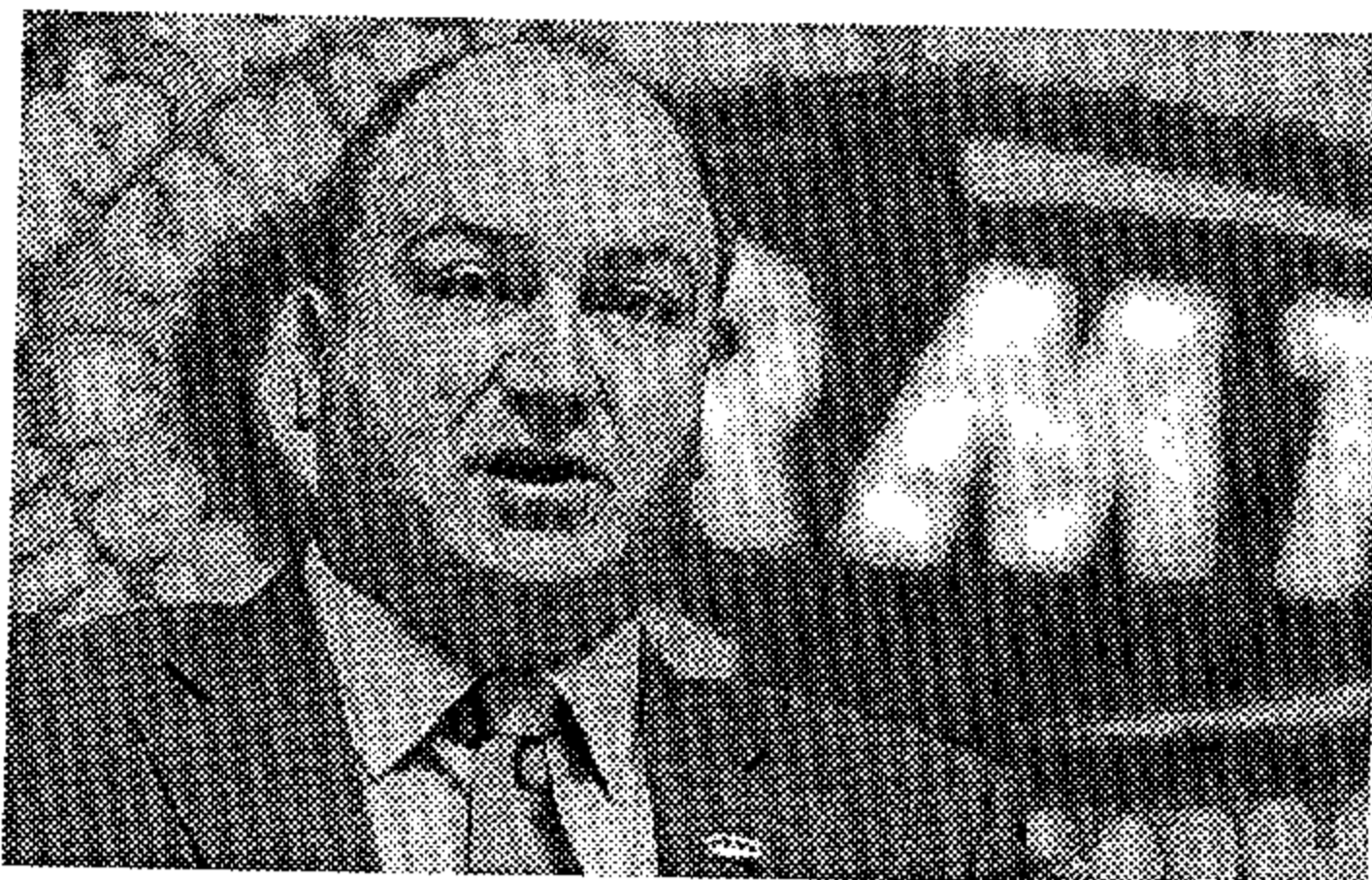
By Dave Stockton

Once again a judge has granted an injunction against a union whose members voted clearly for strike action. The RMT and TSSA members' decision for a four-day national strike against more than 1,500 job cuts on the railways, due to take place on 6-9 April, has been disrupted by being forced to re-ballot because of minor irregularities.

But Network Rail, determined to force the cuts through, applied for an injunction against the RMT's action on the grounds that some signalling points listed on the ballot papers sent to RMT members were no longer active, and that staff no longer worked on them.

Workers in the rail industry move workplace very frequently, and ballot papers were sent to their own homes, not the depots. It would have had no impact on votes recorded in the balloting process. The RMT used Network Rail's own information to carry out the ballot – they believe they received false information from the company to make the injunction easier to get.

Any large scale ballot is bound to have small irregularities of this sort. If the same ultra-strict principles were applied to general elections –



RMT leader Bob Crow said the court injunction on the strike was an attack on the whole trade union movement

for example in the postal balloting the government has pushed for – then the UK would never have a government. What the judges' actions prove – in this case as in the case of the BA ballot before Christmas – is that the law is heavily weighted against workers. It is not neutral or above the contending classes. It is class law.

Thatcher's anti-union laws force unions to hold ballots under conditions that make quick and effective action by workers very difficult.

Instead of workers being able to hold a mass meeting, discuss the issues and vote for action by show

of hands where they can see the extent of the solidarity they need to fight and win, the decision has to be taken individually and in isolation. The counting and registration delay the ability of unions to respond fast to bosses' attacks.

But even under these laws – the most draconian in Europe according to the boasts of Tony Blair who refused to repeal them – strike votes are regularly overturned by judges responding to employers' requests for injunctions. Either they find minor "irregularities" – and they of course decide what these are – or they even cite "public interest"

as the judge did to stop the BA workers striking over Christmas.

When did a judge last grant an injunction to a union to stop an employer making a workforce redundant or closing a workplace? When has a victimised militant been given her or his job back by a judge? No, it takes action – often strike action – to defend workers against the bosses.

RMT union leader Bob Crow said the court injunction ruling was "an attack on the whole trade union movement" and he is right. The Labour Party refused to repeal the anti-union laws. The laws and the unelected judges who implement them – nearly all from upper class backgrounds – hamper every union and every worker fighting unemployment and low pay.

The whole movement must fight to abolish them. The best way to do this is to link up our strikes and defy the anti union laws when the courts force them upon us. But only by the working class taking political power will it be possible get rid of a capitalist judicial system that will always favour the bosses. Then we will be able to sing once more the old Chartist song from the 1840s: "Hurrah for the masses, the lawyers are asses, the judges are going to jail!"

Vote No to Royal Mail's dodgy deal

By a CWU rep

Members of the CWU postal union up and down the UK are appalled at the very bad three year pay deal which has been agreed by the union's pro-Labour officials after last year's national strike.

The deal is now going to the members to approve or reject in a national ballot.

We should kick out this rotten deal with a No vote in the ballot.

Many local union reps and members have criticised the agreement's concessions:

- Longer hours as Saturday becomes a normal working day.

- More junk mail.
- Lower pay rates for workers who deliver the junk mail.
- Thousands of job losses in a wave of office closures.

Royal Mail is recommending the deal – no wonder! They will make massive profits from land sales and junk mail contracts.

But shockingly CWU officials, led by Deputy General Secretary Dave Ward, are going all out to convince members to vote "yes."

They say the company has agreed a woolly "overarching goal" of no compulsory redundancies – but office closures will obviously make a nonsense of that, and anyway it is

not a firm commitment. They say under the deal the company recognises the union's right to negotiate – but what is the point if the price is that the union leaders will agree to whatever the company wants, including huge job cuts?

Last year, our union leaders correctly denounced Royal Mail's so-called modernisation plans as "slash and burn". But now we are in an election month, the pro-Labour union leaders have no alternative to Royal Mail's plan, which the government backs. Under the leadership Dave Ward and Billy Hayes, the CWU has contributed millions to Labour. They justify this by telling

workers that if the Tories win they will privatise Royal Mail. But Labour will do the same – Mandelson tried it last year.

The way to stop privatisation is a strong workforce that can strike to stop the sell off. Agreeing this deal signals a weakened union and makes privatisation more likely.

So far six branches have voted to recommend a no vote to their members. If grassroots opposition comes together quickly we can get the biggest possible no vote, and prepare for the battles ahead whatever the ballot result.

• Read more at <http://redpastie.com>

GENERAL ELECTION 2010

DRINKALL FOR VAUXHALL VOTE ANTICAPITALIST

For the millions, not the millionaires

THE GOVERNMENT gave £1 trillion of our money to the millionaire bankers.

Yet more than half of the children in Vauxhall are officially living in poverty, and one in every three council homes is officially not decent.

Labour, Tory and Lib Dems all backed this \$1 trillion robbery. That's why a new force – the Anticapitalists – are standing in this election.

We want to take over the banks and take back the trillion. We want to spend this huge wealth on jobs, homes, hospitals and schools.

Labour has let ordinary people down, spending all our money on bankers and unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now Labour wants to make us pay the price with cuts to jobs, pay and services.

The Tories will do the same – but faster and worse. They are the party of the super-rich and want deeper cuts, sooner.

The Lib Dems' leader Nick Clegg has called for "savage cuts". He says of bankers: "I've got no problem at all paying them a lot of money – give them a big chauffeur-driven car."

All the main parties back the rich capitalists and want to make working class people pay for a crisis we didn't cause.

But in Vauxhall there is now an alternative.

JEREMY DRINKALL is standing for the ANTICAPITALISTS. He wants to take over the banks, tax the rich and bring the troops home. We'd get our billions back and spend them making life better for millions of ordinary people.

What the ANTICAPITALISTS stand for

A NEW VAUXHALL

51 per cent of children in Vauxhall live in poverty and 36 per cent of all homes are not fit to live in. It's time to stop this right now with a **war on poverty**, raising benefits, freezing rents, making childcare free and putting people back to work.

FREE, QUALITY HEALTHCARE

More NHS services are being contracted to private companies, sapping money from frontline services. The main parties will continue these policies.

JEREMY wants to reverse the sell-offs and put the NHS under workers' and patients' control – a health service democratically run to meet society's needs.

EDUCATION FOR THE MASSES

As a teaching assistant, **JEREMY** wants to **reverse the cuts** that are taking place in schools, colleges and universities, making them **free for all** and to give students **grants** at 16. He wants to improve our schools, place them under the control of parents, teachers and pupils, and **stop cutting pay** for staff.

SMASH ANTI TRADE UNION LAWS

Workers at British Airways and on the railways have been stopped from striking recently by unelected judges. **JEREMY** wants to smash the anti-trade union laws that prevent workers fighting back against the bosses cutting jobs and services.

Jeremy Drinkall says

“ The government has given £1 trillion of our money to the millionaire bankers. Yet more than half of the children in Vauxhall are officially living in poverty, and one in every three council homes fails to meet official standards of decency. Anticapitalists want to take over the banks and spend this huge wealth on jobs, a million new homes, and a national repair and improve programme for council housing. ”



What the bankers say

FINANCIAL NEWS

New anticapitalist party takes aim at banks

The bankers' paper the Financial News said: "Jeremy Drinkall has supported several protests over the years...becoming convinced the state was 'not neutral but defended the rich and powerful.' It would appear there is yet another threat on the horizon for the City and its financial folk."

JEREMY will fight for the interests of working class people against the rich and powerful.

EQUALITY FOR ALL

Discrimination against black and Asian people, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people is still rife within society.

JEREMY will campaign for full equality for all.

He will champion the self-defence of people being attacked by racists, sexists and homophobes.

SUPPORT DRINKALL'S CAMPAIGN

The Anticapitalists need your support in the election

- Come leafleting and canvassing with us in Vauxhall
- Invite **JEREMY** to address your workplace or community group
- Make a donation to our campaign
- Ring 0207 708 4331 or e-mail jeremy.drinkall@google-mail.com
- Visit <http://drinkall4vauxhall.blogspot.com> or joining the Facebook group Drinkall for Vauxhall or follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/votedrinkall.

MARXISTS AND THE ELECTION

Vote for Socialist and

As Gordon Brown calls the most closely contested UK election since the 1970s, **Dave Stockton** calls on workers to vote for anticapitalist and socialist candidates in the 40 constituencies where we can, and for Labour everywhere else in the country

On polling day, millions of working class people will vote Labour.

Despite detesting how Labour took us into the illegal and immoral Iraq war and despite the outrage we all felt when Brown doubled the 10 per cent tax rate for the lowest paid workers, between 9-11 million working class people will put a cross in Labour's box – mainly to keep out the Tories, who are a party of the rich and a proven enemy of working class people.

While the Tories pledge to reduce the deficit by massive cuts in jobs, public services, pay and pensions, by contrast Labour claims it will avoid making cuts too soon and will invest to get through the downturn.

Workers Power doesn't believe Labour – if they win they will again act in the interests of the bankers and bosses, not the workers and the poor. Nevertheless, outside of the 40-odd constituencies where anticapitalist, socialist and trade union candidates are standing, we will call for a vote for the Labour candidate.

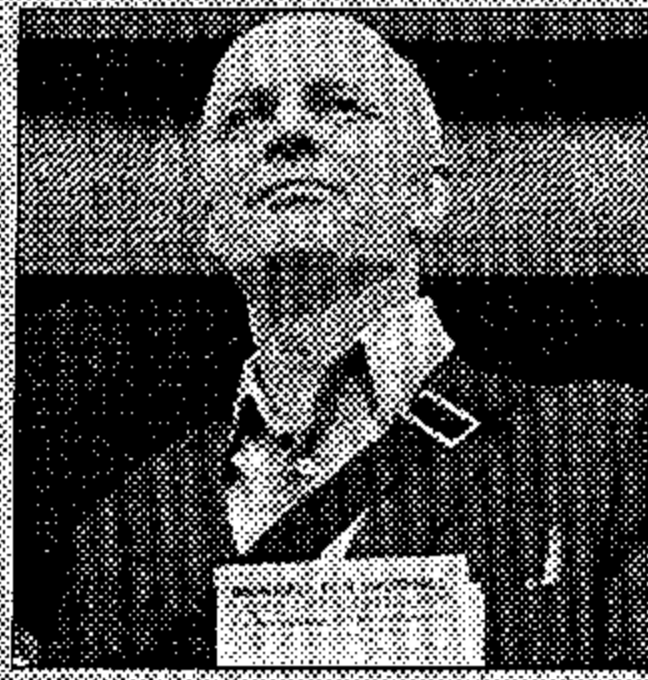
This is not because we support Labour's policies but because Labour is funded by, backed by and deeply connected to the trade unions and the millions-strong organised working class movement in this country. So the best way to prepare our movement to break with Labour and create an alternative party is to keep Labour in power where the contrast between what its supporters want and what it does is at its clearest.

During its 13 years in office, New Labour has served the bank accounts of the British capitalist class. Labour stood by the Tories' anti-working class reforms of the 1980s, in particular Thatcher's anti trade union laws – the strictest anti-worker laws in Europe.

Blair and Brown left in place a tax system that rewards the rich and

Vote Anticapitalist

Jeremy Drinkall is standing in Vauxhall, south London. He is unequivocal about the need for revolution to overthrow the bosses and end capitalism



penalises the poor – rivalled only by tax havens like Liechtenstein and Switzerland. They left the industries privatised by the Tories in the hands of the rich and went on to privatise many more public services.

Labour's pro-city policies

As Chancellor, Gordon Brown praised the City as "innovative" in the way it had become a world centre for the sort of deregulated financial speculation that led to the crash of 2008.

Of course in all these anti-working class actions the Tories backed them all the way. Even the Liberal Democrats have become advocates of "savagely cuts" in public services. So as far as their programmes go, all three parties agree that they are going to attack workers' jobs, pay and conditions – their only difference is over timing.

If that was all there was to this election, there would be no reason to vote for any of the main parties. And if the trade unions and the antiwar movement had shown the vision to create a new working class party, with a bold programme blaming the bankers and bosses for the crisis, then the answer would be simple: we would be able to vote for that in every constituency.

But that new party is yet to be built.

Over the New Labour years, there have been many opportunities to cre-

ate such a party. But instead of setting up a new party based on the masses of union members in struggle against New Labour and the millions who marched against war, the militant unions and various socialist groups favoured electoral adventures – like the Socialist Alliance in the late 1990s and the Respect Coalition in the mid-2000s.

What was needed was a firm commitment to go beyond weak blocs for votes and set up a party of class struggle – an organisation that workers could take seriously at the polls because it would be there after the election trying to build mass resistance made up of strikes, demonstrations and occupations.

Party of struggle needed

A new working class party could aim to take power away from the parasites who exploit us and put it in the hands of a government based on councils of delegates of the working class.

That's the sort of party Workers Power has been campaigning for – and we got hundreds of signatures from across the unions and campaigns for our call for an Anticapitalist party. We are trying to persuade the new Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) to go beyond being a mere electoral bloc and to convene a conference after the election to discuss forming a new party.

But in over 600 constituencies, there is no working class candidate challenging Labour in this election. Most workers who identify with their class and its interests will vote Labour. They will do so thinking that "our party, the party of the unions" will defend us against the attacks.

In this they are partly right but mainly wrong. While it is true that Labour's union links may place some

Labour candidates

Vote for TUSC on 6 May

TUSC candidates in the election include: Karen Reissman, a victimised nurse sacked for whistleblowing about the impact of cuts on her patients, who she is standing in Manchester; and David Henry of the Hazel Blears Must Go Campaign, who is standing in Salford.



restraint on its public sector cuts or on further anti-union laws that the Tories are openly threatening, there are also things Labour can get away with that the Tories could not because of its union base. Under the Tories the war in Iraq would have provoked social upheaval which would have made it impossible. The inroads of private finance in the health service, of businessmen and churches in the schools and the break up of the post office would have been more difficult for the Tories.

Labour can get away with all this because the union leaders systematically sabotaged effective action against them. Just compare the great class battles under the Tories in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s with the lower levels of resistance under Labour (with the exception of the Iraq war) and you can see that the argument “vote Labour as the lesser evil” is a false one.

A Labour government is not necessarily any “less evil” than the Tories, but it is different. It is an evil stemming from within our movement or more accurately from its leadership. This has always cost us dear but today, in a period of prolonged capitalist crises and depression, we cannot afford such a leadership. Getting rid of it is a vital task that cannot be postponed. How can this be done?

In part, at this election, by continuing the job of exposing Labour for the bosses’ party it really is despite its

roots in the labour movement. And for the purpose of uprooting it, Labour in office is better than Labour in opposition. In opposition it will put on its left (or at least its centre-left) face. Already Labour Party members are bringing their banners onto demonstrations against the cuts after years of near total absence.

We believe for all the above reasons that a vote for Labour in this election and a return of Brown and co to Downing Street will, in the words of Lenin, “support them like a rope supports a hanged man.” At a time of crisis this is even more the case, for they will try every way they can to make workers pay for the crisis, and the rank and file in the unions will continue to fight them and their apologists in the union leadership. The unfinished job of breaking the workers’ organisations from Labour can be completed – if the left have the courage to do it.

TUSC stands against cuts

In 40 constituencies the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing candidates. It is opposed to public spending cuts and privatisation, for the repeal of the anti-trade union laws, and the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

Good as far as it goes but it does not go far. It is more limited programme than the Socialist Alliance offered at the beginning of the decade. It is afraid to say that we have to seize

not only the private wealth of the individual capitalists but their ownership of the banks, factories, shops and offices. It fears to be openly anticapitalist and revolutionary.

Of all its weaknesses, the most glaring is that TUSC is unsure of its own immediate future: in its own words, it cannot decide “whether the Labour Party can be reclaimed by the labour movement, or whether a new workers’ party needs to be established.” Thus it dodges the issue of what its candidates will do after the election.

It justifies this equivocation by saying it is only an electoral alliance and that some its component groups offer more far reaching programmes.

Anticapitalist candidate

For this reason, Workers Power – who are standing Jeremy Drinkall as an Anticapitalist candidate in Vauxhall – applied to stand on the TUSC ticket. We were politely informed that this was not possible because the Labour MP for Vauxhall Kate Hoey is a member of the RMT’s parliamentary group. Despite its general secretary Bob Crow’s support for TUSC, the rail union is not officially supporting a challenge to Labour.

Despite this, Workers Power calls for a vote for all TUSC’s candidates because, however inadequately and incompletely, at this election they represent those forces of the most militant sections of workers who have made a break from Labour.

We also call on the TUSC candidates to make clear their commitment to forming a new workers party after the elections and for TUSC to call a conference open to all trade unions and socialist organisations, taking decisive and irrevocable steps towards the formation of a new working class anticapitalist party.

- **Vote Labour to help break the illusions in it**
- **Vote TUSC as a step towards a new party**
- **Vote Anticapitalist in Vauxhall**

THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Capitalism isn't

Luke Cooper and *Marcus Halaby* show that capitalism is a crisis-ridden system – and put forward the case for a socialist transformation of society

Today capitalism is in its most serious crisis in seventy years. But crises are normal under capitalism. Even though Britain had an unusually long period without one (around 13 or 14 years), Gordon Brown's boasts that he had brought "an end to boom and bust" were a pipe-dream. Busts, like booms, are an in-built part of the system.

They happen roughly every eight to ten years, in what economists call the "industrial cycle".

When capitalists – industrialists, traders and financiers – find their investments are not yielding an increasing rate of profit, they panic and try to get out of the game. They close down factories, lay off workers, or shift production to low-wage countries.

These cutbacks spread through the system like wildfire, leaving millions unemployed, communities devastated, and misery and insecurity even for those in work.

Bailouts

When the present crisis erupted in September 2008, with the near-meltdown of the global banking system, the state paid out trillions to save the banks. Then the "markets" – the same bankers and speculators who caused the crisis – made it more difficult for governments to borrow.

In this way, they signalled that they wanted the enormous deficits, that the state ran up to save them, to be reduced, by slashing expenditure on health,

education and welfare. Otherwise, they warned, whole countries would go bankrupt.

Capitalism

These crises are not just a result of "evil speculators" or "greedy bankers". Capitalism itself constantly expands the production of goods, services, and money – but only so long as someone, somewhere, can make a profit can out of them, and in a blind way that ignores real human needs.

If no one, anywhere, can make a profit out of doing something, then it doesn't get done – even if it would satisfy the needs of millions – at least, not unless the state steps in and does it instead.

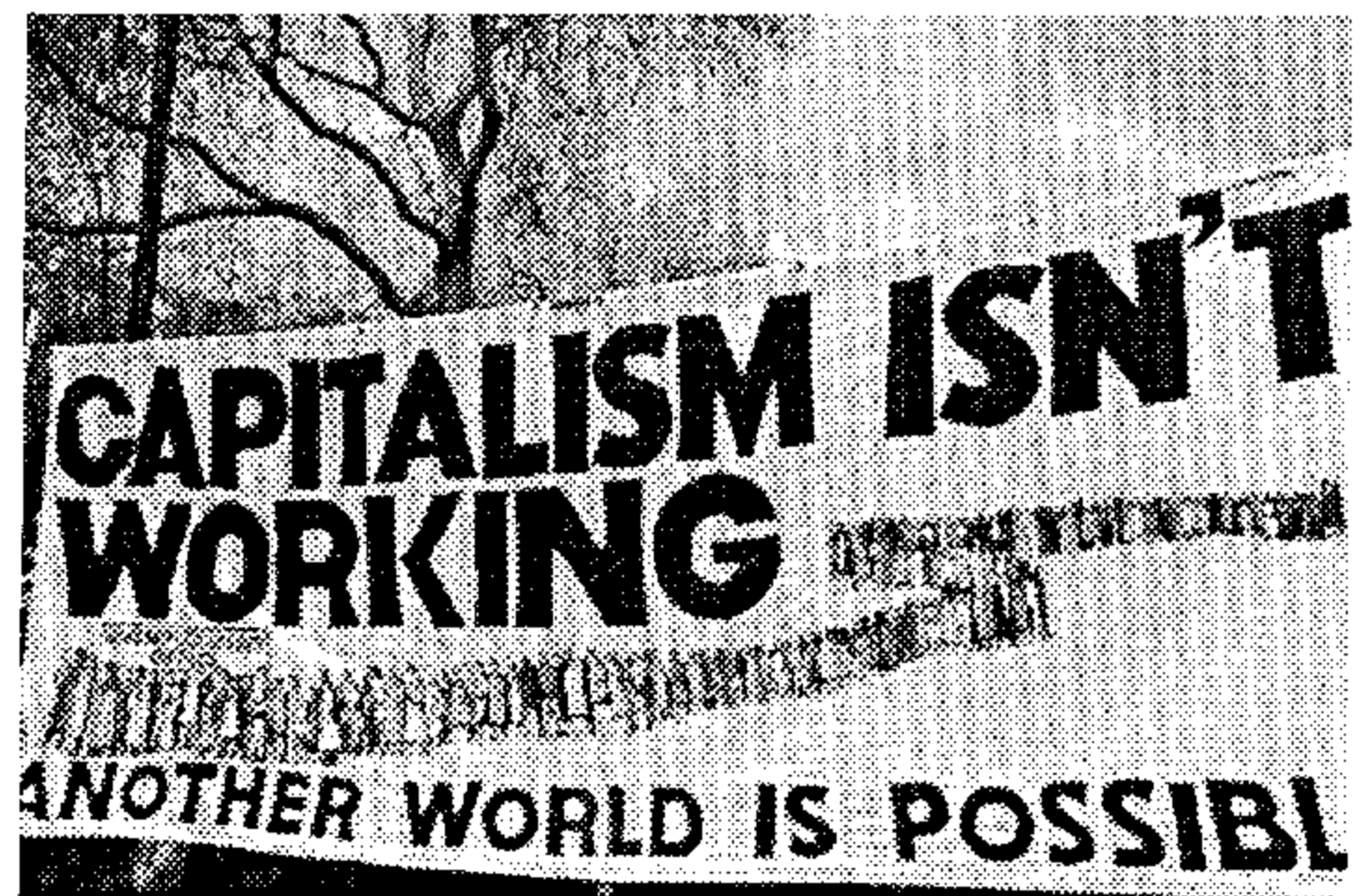
The blind market

That's why hundreds of thousands of people languish on waiting lists for council housing, and millions more live in flats that need repair – even though there are plenty of unemployed construction workers out there available to do the work.

That's why our transport and energy system has not been substantially improved or updated for decades, even though experts warn that we could face regular power cuts within the next ten years.

That's why we can't stop producing the greenhouse gases that threaten catastrophic climate change.

The financial markets – the banks, investment managers, private equity firms and hedge funds – collectively possess a



Banner at G20 'Jobs, Justice, Climate' demonstration

huge mass of information, technology and organisation, that could be used to match the needs of society to the available productive capacity. But because they compete with each other, and because they are run for profit, this massive potential is completely wasted, and they keep their little snippets of knowledge secret from each other.

Slumps

Moreover, the bigger the scale of capitalism's blind growth, the more its crashes bring about social and economic destruction.

Repeated slumps fuel the growth of fascism if workers themselves fail to unite and take power. If this movement of social despair triumphs, as it did in Germany and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s, it leads to catastrophic wars. That is why the growth of the fascist British National Party (BNP) and the marches by thousands of English Defence League (EDL) sup-

porters should be a wake up call.

Fight back

Today frustration, anger and disillusionment with capitalism are mounting. But Labour and Tories alike have told people for decades "there is no alternative." They all tell us to tighten our belts so the fat cats can let theirs out.

For a confident fight back against the mainstream politicians and their demands for sacrifices, millions need to know that there is actually an alternative to the profit system, that the economy can be planned democratically for the benefit of all. This alternative is socialism – and with it emblazoned on our banners once again, we can turn a successful defence into an offensive for fundamental change.

Socialism

If you believe the bosses' media, then socialism is something that failed. Either it happened years ago under Labour governments, or it was a terrible one-party dic-

working

tatorship, like in Eastern Europe. They say that socialism may be a nice idea about equality, but it will never work. Under Tony Blair, Labour dumped its “socialist” baggage, while the so-called “Communist” states of Russia, Eastern Europe and China all went back to capitalism.

But socialism is not just a nice idea dreamed up by Karl Marx in the middle of the 19th Century. It is an inevitable response to – and an outgrowth of – capitalism itself. The huge worldwide machinery of production and exchange, the giant factories, supermarket chains, information systems and banks all make it possible to create a planned economy on a world scale.

Class struggle

The repeated breakdowns of the capitalist system make socialism a burning necessity. How can it happen? Through class struggle. Because the system creates not just crises, but a constant struggle between the two main classes of capitalist society – capitalists and the working class.

The majority, the working class, lives by selling its ability to work for a wage. These wages pay only enough to reproduce the ability to work, to bring up a new generation of workers and look after those too old to work until they die.

On the other hand, a tiny minority, the capitalists, make their profits from the gap, between the value of everything the workers create, and the wages they receive for their work.

Capital, the huge accumulated productivity of labour, is not just money but all the factories, machinery, means of transport and communication. Because they own this property, the capitalists are able to dominate their workers and keep them weak, dividing them with the threat of unemployment and wage cuts.

But by being brought together, the workers learn the need for solidari-

ty and unity, fighting back against the attempts to screw more profits out of them. In every generation, in every country, workers create trade unions and political parties to wage this struggle.

Overcoming the system

But the class struggle need not just be a ceaseless round of the bosses’ attacks and our resistance. For as long as there have been workers and bosses, workers and thinkers drawn towards them have realised that a different kind of society is possible, one without capitalists.

Workers could cooperate to run production and plan it to meet the needs of society as a whole.

Technological advances, instead of throwing millions on the dole and leaving those left behind in fear for their jobs, could be used to share out all the available work and reduce the working week for everyone. This would give us more time for culture, education and family.

The ruthless growth of inequality between rich and poor could be reversed. Scarcity and want could be brought to an end. Ever greater social equality could become a reality, both within countries and between them.

This would be a far more democratic system than the best that capitalism has to offer. Every year, society could make a decision about its collective priorities – whether to use each new increase in productivity to give everyone another hour off the working week, or to create new things – hospitals, schools, dams, bridges, housing, AIDS vaccines, cures for cancer – or even just films, music, televisions and new forms of entertainment.

Revolution

This can happen only if the workers themselves take over the factories, offices, farms, supermarkets, and transport systems that they themselves have built, as well as the banks in which the



Greek workers general strike against fight cuts in February (pic Guy Smallman)

fruits of their labour – capital – are directed to make more profits.

But the bosses can hardly be expected to accept this. Even if the workers elected a socialist majority in parliament committed to this idea, the bosses would never take it lying down.

Their state – the police chiefs, generals, judges and top civil servants – would sabotage, obstruct and eventually use force to stop this from happening. The workers can use their force of numbers to prevail, as they did in Russian in 1917. But to do this, they need to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it – which is why they need a political party of their own.

They need to be able to unite the whole working class, and not just its more stable and privileged layers in the trade unions – which is why they need to create democratic workers’ councils to co-ordinate their struggles, with a voice for everyone – housewives, students, the unemployed and the retired included.

Most importantly, they need to be able to defend themselves against the violence of the state, with an armed force of their own, and win over the rank and file of the army to the side of the people.

The task of socialists is to spread resistance to capitalist crisis, inspire it with the goal of a socialist future, and win millions to a bold programme of revolution and working class power.

INTERNATIONAL FIGHTBACK

Joy MaCready looks at workers' struggles against austerity and cuts

Greece: resistance continues

Greece's credit rating has been downgraded after the announcement of its austerity programme last month.

The yield on Greek bonds – which the country needs to pay to fund its schools, hospitals and other public spending – rose to 7.35 per cent, almost twice as much as Britain's. Greece needs to raise another 35bn this year to refinance its debt, of which 10.5bn must be raised by the end of May. This puts more pressure on Greece, making its financing practically unsustainable.

The reaction of the Greek people has been radically different from Portugal. From the start, people have taken to the streets to protest against the new "Socialist" PASOK government's proposed cuts.

Most recently, two separate demonstrations of employees of the state and private sector were held in the centre of Athens on 8 April. Hundreds of protesters took part in the gatherings organised by labour unions close to the two Left parties represented in the Greek Parliament.

The austerity measures



Protestors battle police in Athens (pic Guy Smallman)

include cuts in civil servants' pay, pension freezes and higher taxes. The PASOK government has said that this will bring the country's deficit down to 8.7 per cent of national income by the end of 2010 from an estimated 12.7 per cent at the end of 2009.

The Greek central government has also decided to cut funds for local governments by 35 per cent in a bid to reduce

the country's budget deficit. Due to the fund cutbacks, cities and municipalities will be forced to reduce spending on services offered to citizens for free, such as after school care for children and programmes which help elderly people who live alone.

But the people are resisting the cuts and the protests will continue. The Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY) has announced a 24-hour strike for

22 April and protest rally on 28 April, and the General Confederation of Labour of Greece (GSEE) is expected to announce a general strike in May after announcements regarding the concrete cuts to the pension system. It is expected that the two largest unions in the country will coordinate their activities in a joint strike.

This is the way forward – an all out general strike of both public and private sector workers.

The European ruling class' biggest fear, and the reason that they have been so quick to come up with a rescue package, is the fear that these strikes will spread, or worse yet that Greece will default on its debt. "What concerns me is that, after a year or two, the public will get fed up with austerity and they may decide to vote in someone who simply refuses to pay," said an investment broker.

Too right! Greek workers need a new revolutionary party to drive the bosses from power and take control into the hands of councils of workers' delegates.

Portugal: making workers pay for the crisis

Despite scrambling to push through a severe austerity programme aimed at cutting its budget deficit, Portugal has been downgraded by credit ratings agency Fitch. "A sizeable fiscal shock against a backdrop of relative macro-economic and structural weaknesses has reduced Portugal's credit worthiness," said an analyst from Fitch.

In other words, Portugal is following Greece down the pan. The downgrade means that Portugal has to pay higher yields on government bonds to attract investors, making it more expensive for the country to borrow money. Today, it costs Greece twice as much to borrow as it does Ger-

many; now Portugal faces the same.

And yet Portugal had already announced a series of new cuts to avoid a debt crisis like the one in Greece. It announced plans to cut its public deficit from 8.3 per cent to 2.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2013, in line with the 3 per cent rule set for the 16 eurozone nations that share the single currency.

Like the Labour Party in the UK, Portugal's minority government of the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista) claims to stand for the workers but does the bosses' work. It will cut welfare payments and block job creation in the public sector. The government also aims to raise 6 billion through

"a number of privatisations" – a wholesale selling-off of public services.

Although the trade unions have threatened to strike over plans for a public sector wage freeze and pension cuts, they have not mobilised people against this rotten plan. What is needed is militant action, as seen in Greece, to force the bosses to pay for the crisis that they created.

Workers should not be soft on a "socialist" government that does not stand up for their interests, but need to organise, agitate and strike against cuts in wages and public services, and privatisation. Take up the slogan from Greece: we will not pay for this crisis!

Obama healthcare reform - 23 million Americans abandoned

Many are hailing the new US healthcare bill as a major breakthrough – as of last month an extra 32 million US citizens now have health insurance. On top of that, insurance can no longer be refused on the grounds of medical history and there is a big increase in Medicare cover for people on low incomes.

Yet the bill still leaves 23 million Americans uninsured and without healthcare. The new law will force middle income earners to buy insurance, costing as much as 9.5 per cent of their income, which would still only cover about 70 per cent of medical expenses. Also, the already powerful insurance companies will be given an extra \$450 mil-



Healthcare reform still leaves many uninsured

lion a year in public money to subsidise their products.

In short, this bill does nothing to challenge the profit-driven stranglehold of the insurance companies over healthcare in the US. Many Americans will not see any benefit until 2014, and by then the insurance com-

panies could have increased their premiums substantially.

Also Obama gave up on many key points of the Act as it made its way through the Congress: for example, women will have to pay for abortions “100 per cent out of their own pocket”.

Many of his supporters are enraged that Obama caved in. But from the start, the Democrat party did not want a radical bill. Wedded to capitalism and heavily funded by the health insurance companies, the Democrats cannot actually provide what so many people want and need – a fully funded, free healthcare available at the point of demand. For that, US workers will need a party of their own.

End the siege of Gaza!

For the first time in three years of economic blockade of the Gaza Strip, Israel has been forced to allow shoes and clothes into the occupied Palestinian territory.

Most other goods are still banned, including construction materials, meaning that thousands of homes, hospitals and schools destroyed by the Israeli air assault last year still lie in rubble.

Israel imposed a full economic blockade on Gaza when the Islamist movement Hamas took control of the territory in June 2007, after first being denied power even though it won the Palestinian elections in January 2006.

Nearly all exports and imports are banned and only a tightly limited supply of food and medical aid is allowed in.

Shipments into Gaza are a long way short of the 400 trucks a day that were envisaged under an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians brokered by the US in late 2005.

The siege has forced Gazans to dig smuggling tunnels across the Egyptian border to get

basics like water and food. Egypt also keeps its one crossing into Gaza mainly closed and has started building a steel underground wall to curb smuggling.

The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, and other international leaders have described Israel's siege as “collective punishment”, which is illegal under international law. And yet the major powers take no action – even when Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu announced an extension of the illegal settlements (an extra 1,600 homes are planned in the East Jerusalem area). This is because Israel is backed and bankrolled by the US.

In the UK, the TUC and Palestine Solidarity Campaign have launched a Ban Settlement Goods campaign and have called upon the UK government to support the ban in order to stem “the daily expansion of Israeli settlements and the relentless siege of Gaza”. We need to raise this call up and down the UK. End the siege of Gaza! Freedom for Palestine!

Bolivia: People's Climate Conference

After the utter failure of the December UN talks on climate change in Copenhagen, where 45,000 people came together for over two weeks and made no decisions on carbon emission targets, Bolivia's populist president Evo Morales has responded by calling a “people's summit”.

This month, from 19-22 April, more than 7,500 people will gather in Cochabamba for the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth with hopes of “helping shift power back to the people, which is where it needs to be on this critical issue for all humanity,” according to Bolivia's UN ambassador Pablo Solón.

Cochabamba will play host to developing countries that resisted being press-ganged by the USA and EU into signing the toothless Copenhagen Accord, as well as hundreds of civil organisations, scientists and religious leaders who felt they had no voice in Copenhagen because they were arguing against the rich industrialised countries' agenda.

From the outset, the process of the Cochabamba conference stands in stark contrast to the Copenhagen Summit. Instead of secret backroom deals between industrialised countries, the Cochabamba conference has organised 17 working groups around such topics as the social causes of climate change, climate migrants, climate debt, and action.

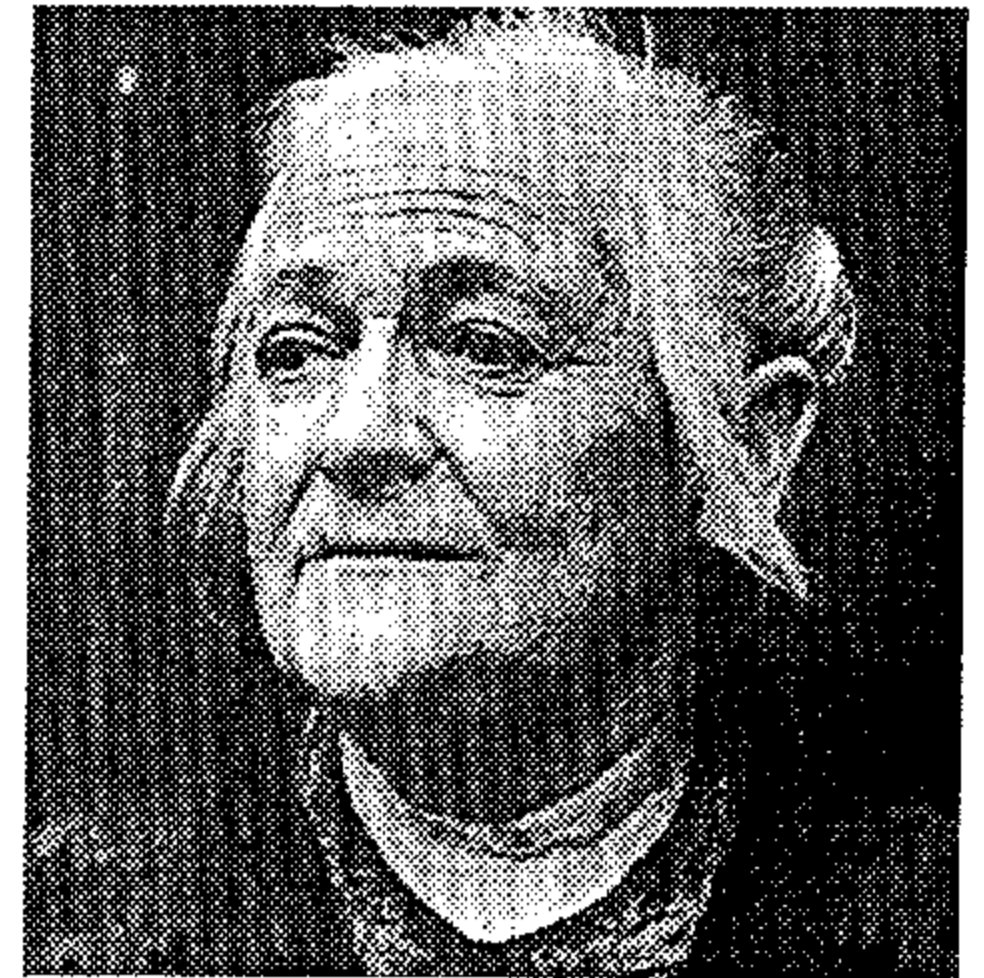
This conference is an important development, but for it to become more than just a talking shop and live up to its vision of shifting power back to the people, working class and peasant movements will need to create a more permanent structure, one that is open and democratic, and which links the struggle against climate change to the struggle against the system of oppression and exploitation – capitalism.

For this to happen, working class and peasant organisations will need to keep themselves independent of populist regimes like Bolivia's which are sponsoring the conference but are still based on the capitalist system in their own countries.

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN IN HISTORY

Clara Zetkin

“We have the will to world revolution, therefore we must find the way to reach the masses of exploited women”



We continue our series on revolutionary women with a look at the great German socialist Clara Zetkin pioneer of the struggle for women's liberation. **By Natalie Sedley**



Clara Zetkin, born in 1857, was a key figure in the world's first mass socialist party, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), where she fought

for the cause of women's rights.

Then, as today, women earned less than men, but without today's equal pay laws. Women had very few rights. Divorce was restricted; men owned women's property and women couldn't vote.

Zetkin had to overcome the resistance of the party's male leaders, to make it the first in the world to demand rights for women workers in 1891. She launched a newspaper for women called *Gleichheit* (Equality), with the subtitle “for the interests of working women.”

In the 1880s and 1890s, industry spread across Germany, drawing hundreds of thousands of women into the factories. The SPD became a mass party with a huge membership, but women were banned from joining political parties or trade unions.

Fighting the ban

Zetkin set up a special organisation for working class women, which remained important even after the ban was lifted in 1908. Women faced a double burden of work in the factory and housework at home. They often faced domestic violence in the family. Even in the SPD they were often not taken seriously.

Zetkin was not just an organiser, but also great thinker and writer. Building on the works of Marxists like Frederick Engels and August Bebel, she argued that socialism was the only way to win genuine women's

liberation, and that a socialist revolution would be impossible without involving women in the struggle against capitalism.

Like the Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai, Zetkin took care to distinguish this struggle from the women's movement that had been launched by women from the capitalist class. Many of these bourgeois feminists wanted to extend the vote only to women who owned property.

Zetkin warned that these women were “enemy sisters”. She was soon proved right when they refused to support struggles for laws protecting women at work, rather like many feminists today, who are all for more female company directors, but who don't support women workers when they strike to defend their jobs and pay.

Women's international struggles

Zetkin made the struggle for women's rights international. In 1907 she organised the first International Conference of Socialist Women, attended by delegates from 15 countries, to coordinate the struggle for the vote and build mass socialist women's organisations worldwide.

At the second conference in 1910, she called for an International Women's Day. In March the following year, rallies in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden were attended by over a million workers, under the slogan: “The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism.”

This all took place as part of a worldwide socialist movement, united in a single organisation: the Second International. But tragically, the Second International fell apart with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, when the leaders of the SPD and its other national parties supported their “own”

capitalist governments in war.

Zetkin stood up against nationalist hatred, together with revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Their tiny grouping bravely opposed the war, and denounced the SPD leaders for betraying the international working class by supporting the slaughter.

This movement grew as the horrors of war hit home. After 1919 Zetkin became a leader of the newly founded Third International and the leader of its communist women's organisation.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Zetkin saw that Germany was in a revolutionary period and that the Communists needed to struggle for power. She called for a united front of all the workers' parties in the fight against the threat of fascism and for a workers' government. She stressed that the working class would only be able to stop the middle classes from going over to the fascists if it came forward itself as a force that all could see was willing and ready to take over and rule:

“The signs of disintegration, which are before our eyes, give us the conviction that the giant proletariat will again join in the revolutionary fray, and that its call to the bourgeois world will be: I am the strength, I am the will, in me you see the future!”

Zetkin remains an inspiration to socialists today. She showed how socialists need to fight for the rights of women even within their parties and unions, how the unity of the women and men of the working class has to be fought for every day, and how millions of working class women can be rallied to take their place alongside men in the fight for socialism.

• **Read Clara Zetkin's writings at www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/**

FIGHT FOR EDUCATION

Sussex shows militant action is way to win!



Mass meeting
of Sussex
students

All over the country, workers and young people face cuts in services and in jobs – and education is bearing the brunt of it. But recently a fantastic campaign in Sussex shows how unity and direct action can defeat attacks by cuts-crazy managers. It's an inspiration to us all!

John Bowman and Rix Price

Students at the Sussex had been fighting against proposed cuts for the past 18 months, but this term the campaign took off in a big way. University management, led by Vice Chancellor Michael Farthing (who takes home £220,000 a year), is planning £3 million of cuts this academic year, followed by a further £5 million next year, threatening over 60 jobs.

On 4 March, students occupied a building used for management and lucrative corporate events. Management called in the riot police, complete with attack dogs. Police pushed some students down a hill and arrested others. The university successfully applied for a court order to make similar protests illegal in the future and direct-

ALICE, A SUSSEX STUDENT, EXPLAINS

There were weekly meetings and stalls explaining the cuts to students. Trade unionists were invited, mass public meetings were held, and there were several demos, culminating in a 600-strong demonstration at the end of term.

The continuing support of the Students Union and UCU, the lecturers' union, has been invaluable, and regular meetings and speakers from both unions have knitted the group together.

Police violence on campus and subsequent student suspensions mobilised those that had not been previously involved. Staff and students came together in the eight-day occupation of the Arts A2 lecture theatre. Teach-ins and lengthy discussions helped to engage and inform students.

Students brought their own skills, ideas and discussion topics together in a democratic way... I would recommend a regular forum in which to discuss the proposed tactics, bringing ideas to the group and voting on them.

ly suspended six students bypassing normal disciplinary proceedings.

But the heavy-handed actions of management electrified the university campus and people from across the country sent photographs to the campaign,

holding placards with the slogan "I occupied Sussex House" in solidarity with the suspended students.

An 11 March demonstration in support of the Sussex Six attracted just over 400 students and staff. They occupied a lec-

ture theatre, defying the court injunction against occupations.

On 17 March, an emergency student union meeting was packed out with over 800 students, with hundreds more that couldn't get in. The student union passed two motions with an overwhelming majority, calling for the reinstatement of the six activists victimised by management, and expressing no confidence in Vice Chancellor Michael Farthing.

Faced with this show of strength, management caved in! On the same day, the University Senate voted for "immediate and unconditional reinstatement of the Sussex Six".

The occupation lasted until 18 March when lecturers took strike action against the redundancies and students joined their teachers on the picket lines.

So now the fight goes on!

Troops Out of Afghanistan Now!

One issue that none of the main parties will be campaigning on in this election is the war in Afghanistan.

Why? Because Labour, Tory and Lib Dems all support it, while the majority of the people don't.

Opinion polls could not be clearer:

- 63 per cent want all British forces withdrawn
- 64 per cent think the war is "unwinnable"
- 54 per cent can't see why Britain should be there in the first place
- 52 per cent believe that the recent rigged Afghan elections show the war is not for democracy or freedom and "is not worth fighting"

You wouldn't know this from the mainstream newspapers (all owned by millionaires) or from the TV. They jump on every tragic British death in combat as a way to boost support for the war, exploiting grief for political purposes.

Alongside every expression of sympathy for the families, they cynically add that the soldier "died fighting for us" or "fighting for freedom".

But the tragic fact is that the troops are not dying for us - they are dying for the generals and politicians who have sent them there. They are not dying for freedom but for big US and British oil barons and control of the central Asian region.

That's why people who feel genuine sympathy for the soldiers and their families should not be backing this war, but should be fighting for them to be pulled out of Afghanistan immediately.

The sympathy people feel for the troops is entirely natural. The privates are "ordinary people", just like us - many of them conscripted by boredom, poverty and the lack of opportunity that is the norm in towns and cities across the country. They are "doing their job", a dangerous one, and have had no more say in the matter

than we have. In fact, if anything, they have had even less say; soldiers are not allowed to form unions, not allowed to strike and not allowed to expose the reality of the dirty war they are fighting, or speak out against it.

The sad fact is, however, that they are there for bad and wrong reasons - to keep Afghanistan and the resources of central Asia safe for the same bankers, billionaires and politicians that are attacking our

"If you are one of the 63 percent who want the troops out now, vote for anticapitalist candidates who oppose the war"

Vauxhall



Jeremy Drinkall, anticapitalist candidate calls for troops out now

living standards back here in Britain.

We have been told a tissue of lies about this war. They said it was a "war on terror" - but we are now more exposed to more terrorism as a result of the war.

They said the invasion of Afghanistan would improve the rights of women - but many Afghan women are now worse off than they were under the Taliban. The US- and

UK-backed government of President Karzai has legalised rape within marriage.

They said the war would stop cheap heroin flooding our streets - but the war itself has created a boom in opium production, and President Karzai's brother is the country's biggest smuggler.

Most importantly of all, most Afghan people do not want the troops there. Even if British public opinion were behind the war - as it was, briefly after the 9/11 atrocities - they would still be invaders, occupying a country against the will of its people, provoking justified resistance.

Anticapitalists say that the troops should be withdrawn immediately - not in a "phased" withdrawal like the one from Iraq that allows our governments to continue the war by other means, and certainly not in the four years or more that armed forces head Sir Jock Stirrup has warned will be necessary for the puppet Afghan army to take over.

We say not a penny should be spent on these occupations. Spend the billions on jobs, on hospitals, on schools, on repairing and improving council flats.

The capitalist system of private profit means constant wars as countries compete and fight each other for resources. We fight for a socialist system based on a planned economy that can share the world's resources and create lasting peace.

If you are one of the 63 percent who want the troops out now, vote for socialist candidates who oppose the war.

• Vote for one of the 42 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidates who are standing across the country

• Vote for local trade unionist and Anticapitalist candidate Jeremy Drinkall in Vauxhall constituency

• And after the election, join with us in building a powerful anti-war movement to force whoever wins the election to get the troops out now.