

# Workers power 5

March 2011 ★ Price £1 / 1.50 Issue 352

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

## TOGETHER WE CAN STOP THE CUTS

# ONTO THE STREETS ON

# 26 MARCH



Do everything you can to get yourself, your friends, family and workmates down to London on 26 March for the TUC's demonstration against the cuts.

Let's take a leaf from the protests around the world.

Let's take over the capital, fill the streets and kickstart a nationwide wave of marches, occupations and strikes.

And let's not stop until we've broken the cuts and brought down this vicious millionaire government.

**INSIDE – REVOLUTION SWEEPS NORTH AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST pages 4, 5, 12, 14, 15**

**WHERE WE STAND**

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation formed in 1976 in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and applying their ideas to the fight against capitalism today.

We are the British Section of an international tendency formed in 1989, which in 2003 adopted the name League for the Fifth International to express our fight for a new world party of social revolution.

Capitalism is a crisis-ridden social system that repeatedly plunges the world into destructive phases of economic downturn, instability and war. Private ownership of the means of production obstructs the development of human potential and leaves billions in poverty while a handful of oligarchs monopolise wealth and resources.

The alternative to capitalism is generated by the class struggle of the modern working class which repeatedly organises resistance to the ruling capitalist class. Today, with global capitalism again entering an historic crisis, working class resistance is springing up everywhere against the capitalists' attempts to make the workers pay for a crisis we never caused.

By developing a new revolutionary leadership, the working class can unify its resistance to the capitalist offensive and convert it into a challenge to the rule of capital itself. This means overthrowing the capitalist class in an armed revolution, breaking up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state and replacing it with the rule of councils of recallable delegates from workplaces and working class communities, guarded and defended by a workers' militia.

The principal obstacle to the victory of working class resistance is the leadership of the working class movement itself. From social-democrats and Labourites through to the mainstream Communist parties with their Stalinist ideology, the mass political parties of the working class movement have long since abandoned the road of revolution. Their reformist ideology not only obscures the road to working class power, but systematically disorganises resistance to the cuts and the capitalist offensive today.

The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to challenge the misleadership of social democracy and Stalinism, but since 1951 has abandoned this task and everywhere adapts to their leadership. For this reason, we everywhere raise the call for the formation of a new world party of social revolution, a Fifth International.

# Why we are joining the 26 March demo



"I am marching because the cuts will affect those least able or likely to speak out for themselves. I work with homeless young people and domestic abuse survivors, and feel the government isn't recognising how these cuts will seriously put people's lives in danger. Women and children will be hardest hit by these cuts."

**Siân, Project worker for young homeless people**

"As an active member in the student protests, I think it is paramount to our movement that we link up with workers and trade unions. The decimation of our services and the ideological attack on our welfare state can only be defended if we all unite in struggle. I'll be there on the 26 March."

**Joana Pinto, NUS Vice-Presidential candidate**



"Essential help and support services in Manchester, like the South Manchester Law Centre which I volunteer for are losing some of their funding. And this at a time when people are finding it harder to get work, suffering greater financial and legal problems. This injustice has to stop."

**Sonia Wilson, South Manchester Law Centre**

## TUC National Demonstration, Saturday 26 March

Assemble 11am at Victoria Embankment for march to Hyde Park

### JOIN US!

- I would like to join the Workers Power group
- Please send more details about Workers Power

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tel no:** \_\_\_\_\_

## workers power 5

**Workers of all countries, unite!**

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

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The revolutions in North Africa have changed the situation

# We can beat the Tories!

ALONG WITH thousands of activists, all our readers will be striving to make the 26 March demonstration as big as possible.

500,000 jobs to go in the public sector. Another 500,000 to follow in the private sector.

34 per cent cuts in council spending leading to libraries, youth services, care for the elderly all being savaged.

The Con Dem's promise not to touch front-line services has been exposed as a lie, with 50,000 job losses planned in the NHS alone.

Youth unemployment has reached 20 per cent, while college fees have trebled and the EMA grant for young college students have been axed.

No wonder so many people are getting ready to join the march on London.

The magnificent students put in the groundwork last winter, inspiring millions and defying the government. Local rebellions against council cuts are spreading all over the country (see page 6).

Now we need hundreds of thousands filling the streets of the capital to demand an end to the cuts of this illegitimate Coalition.

A wave of rebellion around the world has shown us how to do it.

The revolutions sweeping North Africa and the Middle East have shaken the world. They show that the way to stop the rich and powerful trampling the poor is by mass action on the streets by the people ourselves.

And it's not just in the Middle East. 2011 is turning into one of those years where millions of people show their power – a year like 1848, 1917, 1968 and 1989.

The revolt in Wisconsin (see page 13) shows how strikes, demonstrations and occupations work in the West too.

## The Arab revolt

In the Middle East and North Africa the revolutionary struggles are spreading every day.

In Tunisia and Egypt the battle is on to drive the revolution forward and clear out the remnants of the old regime. The workers, peasants and poor in the cities must remain on guard and prevent the military, "councils of the wise", remnants of the old guard or the West from robbing them of the fruits of their sacrifice.

They need to make the revolution permanent by seizing the factories and the land, convening a revolutionary constituent assembly, and

taking power into the hands of democratic popular committees.

As we go to press most of Libya has fallen to the revolution, with fierce fighting in the towns around Tripoli. The revolution is also on the march in Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, Morocco.

There is no doubt that this example will give courage to people everywhere.

## Resistance in Britain

In Britain we face a reactionary government hell bent on privatisation, mass unemployment and welfare and public service cuts across the board.

The TUC leaders have spent five months preparing the 26 March demonstration. For them this is a way of showing that they are doing something against the cuts. They hope that a single day's protest will scare the government.

They are wrong. We need more radical and sustained action – both on the day and after. The proposal to occupy Hyde Park and stay there overnight – an idea directly taken from the Egyptian, Tunisian and Wisconsin struggles – is a good start. But we need more.

Across the country, people are taking direct action to stop cuts. Whether it is protests to stop nurseries from being closed or occupations of Town Halls when they are voting through the cuts packages, the resistance is growing.

University and college lecturers could – if they win their ballot – take the fight onto the national level by striking the week before the march.

The demonstration on 26 March must be the start of a campaign of protests, strikes and occupations to bring down the government.

## General strike

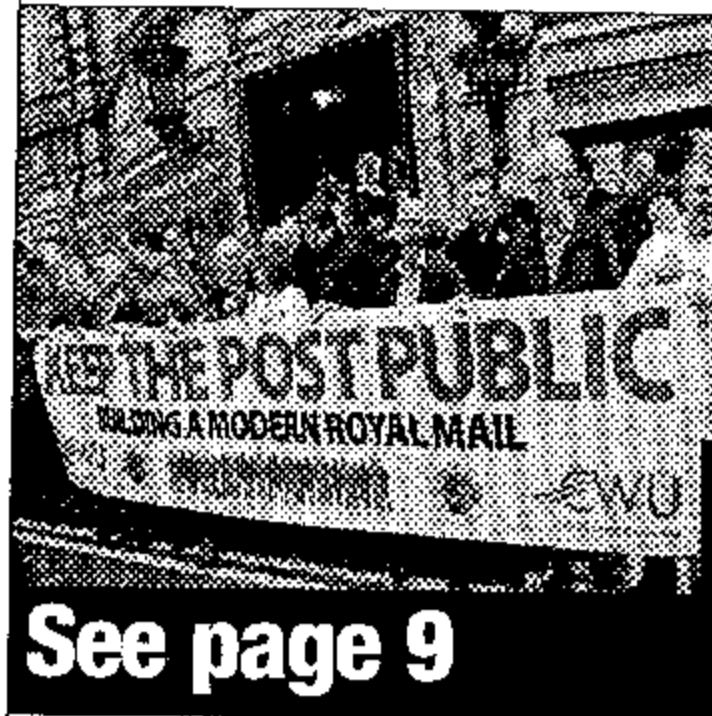
This is why socialists are campaigning for a general strike to bring the Coalition down. This is not just a demand on the TUC and trade union leaders. It is also something that must be built from below through anticuts groups and committees of action.

Most importantly we need a new party, one that fights for the interests of working people and unites the anticuts activists across the country in a fightback that leads not just to a change of government, but a change in society itself.

If the Egyptians can bring down a military regime, then we can bring down this weak Coalition government!

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# This great revolution rages on

Simon Hardy

The revolutions sweeping north africa and the mass protest movements across the middle east are a sign of the times. For too long people there have been living under the boot of western imperialism and authoritarian dictatorships. Now the people have risen up.

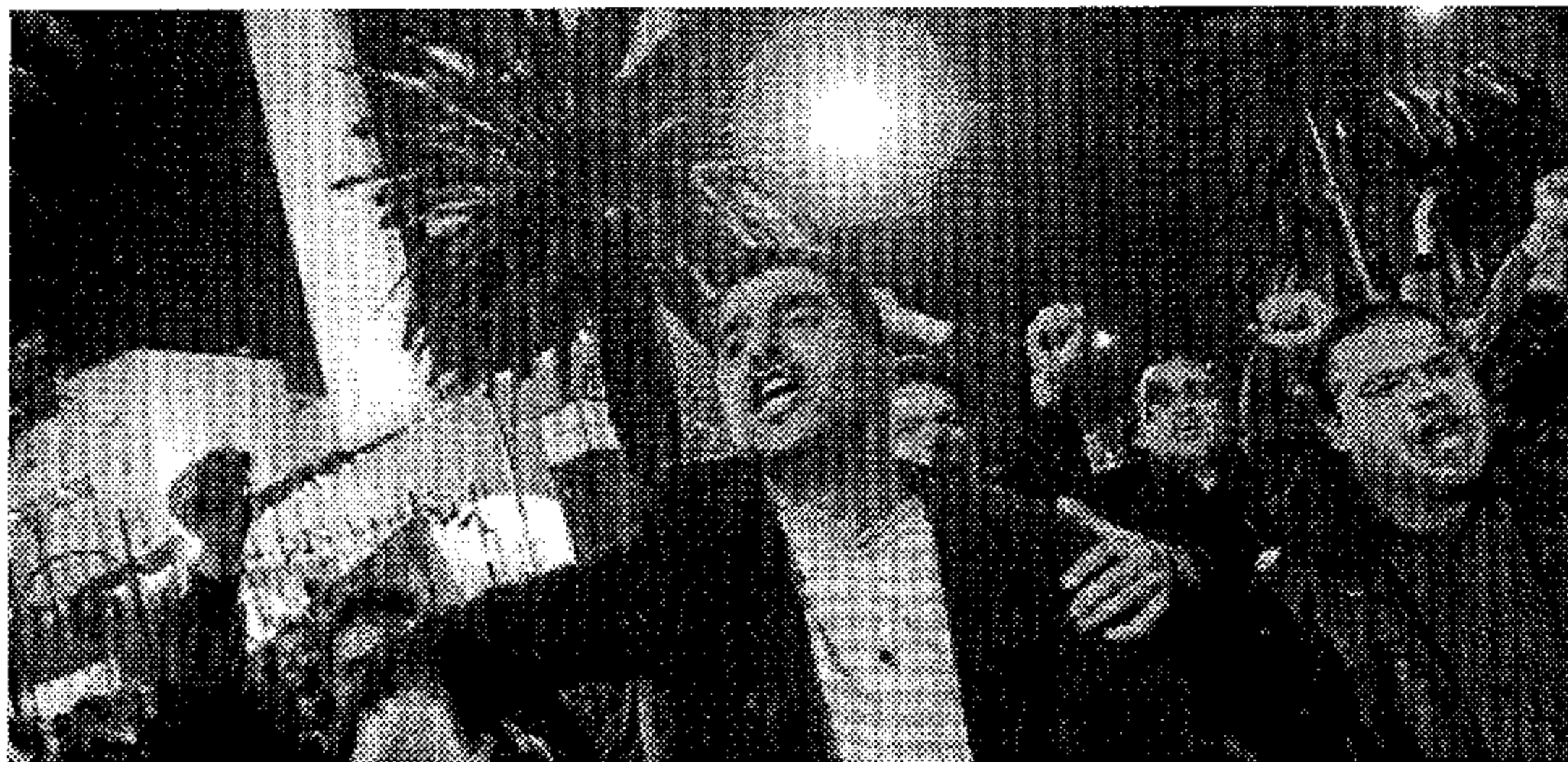
Protests have spread beyond the region, also being reported in Gabon, Cameroon and Zimbabwe. They have even erupted in Sinuiju and two other cities in North Korea, as well as Vietnam. In China, where the economy is still booming, dozens of democracy and human rights activists have been detained or put under close surveillance.

Everywhere, young activists who face regimes that condemn them to hardship, hopelessness and enforced silence have been planning to repeat Tahrir Square. Clearly this revolutionary year has many more surprises in store for the world's corrupt and brutal rulers. There is a new mood in the air - that great things can be achieved.

## Lessons for the future

The Egyptian and Tunisian movements show how a courageous minority can spark a mass movement by facing down the bullets and batons of the police, and how to make use of the new social media to overcome state censorship. They show how important it is to remain intransigent when rulers offer compromises or deceitfully appeal for talks.

But there are negative as well as positive lessons. In Tunisia and Egypt, despite the fall of the dictators, the military regimes have not gone. In Egypt, the state of emergency is still in force, elections are



Tunisia: protesters take to the streets again to protest against the interim government

postponed till the autumn, and "experts", not the peoples' representatives, will amend the dictators' constitutions. These facts indicate that the regimes have had only a thin veneer of democratic cover over them.

## Not finished

The unfinished character of the revolutions was given a practical demonstration in Tunis and Cairo on 24 and 25 February. In Tunis, riot police and masked police in civilian clothes fired shots and tear gas, after 100,000 demonstrators demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi. The next day Ghannouchi resigned.

In Cairo hundreds of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square on 24 February. But late in the evening the army turned off the lights and sent in soldiers, wearing masks and wielding electric cattle prods to clear the square. The army has since apologised, but at the same time continues to denounce the wave of strikes that is sweeping the country.

It is plain that - in spite of the power of the masses on the streets to force continued concessions - the main demands of the democratic movement

remain unfulfilled. The states of emergency must be ended. The right to strike and the freedom of the press, the broadcast and online media must be established. All political prisoners must be released, the desert torture camps of the secret police opened to inspection and all banned parties legalised. Those accused of crimes against the people under the old regimes must be arrested and tried by juries of working people and youth.

## Constituent assembly

Last but not least, the attempt to amend the constitution by the Army High Council or a commission of experts must be abandoned, and elections to a sovereign Constituent Assembly held. This assembly must not be restricted to drafting the basic law. It must tackle the burning problems of ordinary Egyptians: mass unemployment, soaring prices and hunger, villagers robbed of their livelihoods by former landowners and the terrible slum condition in Cairo and other cities.

If such an assembly can be convened, millions discover what democracy can do for them then no collection of geri-

atric generals will be able to restore a dictatorship, and the masses will surge forward to find revolutionary solutions to these problems. The youth who led the revolution thus far must fully recognise that the key revolutionary force is the working class.

## Control

In Egypt and Libya at the height of the revolution, the people formed neighbourhood committees to organise security, clean the streets and distribute food and water. The workers need to form their own delegate councils that can fight for control of the factories, docks, towns and cities.

## Plan

The peasants too must organise against the landlords. In Egypt workers have already formed factory councils and new unions in order to advance their demands. These workers' councils are the embryos of a new form of democracy, superior by far to parliaments and millionaire politicians: a new form of a state which can take the economy out of the hands of the capitalists and plan it to meet people's needs.

# Middle East in revolt

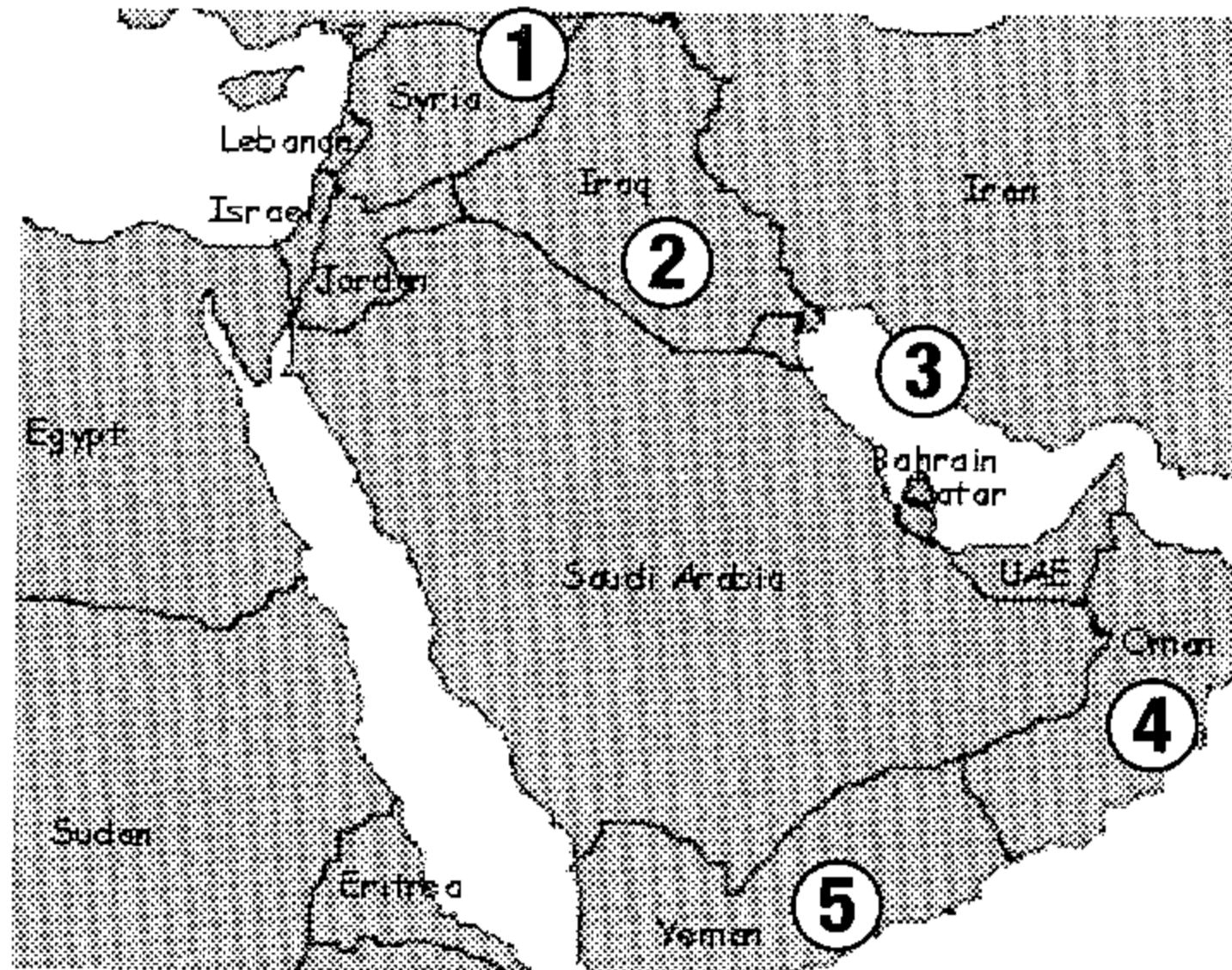
The revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya have sparked off a wave of protests throughout the Middle East, raising demands for democratic change and for improvements in living standards.

## Syria

**1** A routine act of police brutality against a shopkeeper on 17 February spontaneously provoked a crowd of 1,500 passers-by to intervene, forcing the Interior Minister to arrive in person to promise an investigation.

## Iraq

**2** Pro-occupation prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's promise on 5 February that he would not stand for re-election in 2014 failed to prevent protests against corruption and favouritism in the allocation of public services. In Sulaymaniyah in the autonomous Kurdish region, unemployed youths marched on the party



offices of regional president Massoud Barzani.

## Bahrain

**3** Protesters occupied Pearl Roundabout in the capital Manama on 14 February, demanding a new constitution and equal rights for the country's Shi'a majority. Seven were killed and hundreds

injured by police attacks. Within a week, the protests drew in more than half the country's local population of 570,000, defeating government attempts to split them on sectarian lines. King Hamad has since announced the beginning of a "national dialogue", the release of political prisoners and a grant of \$3,000 to each family.

## Oman

**4** The government raised the minimum wage by 43 per cent on 17 February to head off protests, while the following day in Kuwait, two protesters were killed as the 'bidoons' (stateless residents) demanded citizenship rights.

## Yemen

**5** A government already weakened by a secessionist movement in the south and a Shi'a tribal uprising in the north faced protests in the southern capital Aden on 14 January.

These were joined on 27 January by tens of thousands in the northern (and national) capital Sana'a demanding the resignation of president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Demonstrators celebrating the downfall of Egypt's president Mubarak on 11 February were attacked with knives, sticks, and assault rifles.

## Can a democratic revolution topple the House of Saud?

Before events in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Libya most experts would say "never" to this question. Saudi Arabia is the most repressive country in the Middle East and maintains an absolute monarchy with no elected parliament or political parties. Women's rights are non-existent and they are not even allowed to drive cars.

Yet the events in the rest of the Arab world have put the wind up these autocrats. The 87-year-old King Abdullah has responded to the upheavals

by announcing \$37 billion in handouts to Saudi citizens, including pay raises, unemployment benefits and increased housing provision.

Unprecedentedly, over 1,000 – mainly foreign – construction workers have called for a general strike at the construction site of Saudi Binladin Group, which is one of the largest construction projects in the country.

In Saudi, too, the internet poses a challenge to the regime. Young Saudi bloggers have

spread the news of the unrest in Tunis, Cairo and Benghazi, and are building a social media movement. Hundreds of people have backed a Facebook campaign calling for a "day of rage" across Saudi Arabia on 11 March, to demand an elected ruler, greater freedom for women and the release of political prisoners.

A rebellion in Saudi Arabia, let alone a revolution, will not be easy. It will not be bloodless. Indeed, as events in Libya show, these types of state where

the rulers have prevented the growth of a native working class and have built up a well-paid high-tech apparatus of repression will hold on to the bitter end. Nor will the western imperialists and Israel look with a friendly eye to the destabilisation of their top remaining asset in the Middle East.

But in the context of a tidal wave of democracy, headed by the youth, sweeping the entire region it can happen. 2011 is one of those years in which everything is possible.



**industrial overview from  
JEREMY DRINKALL**

## Is the TUC building the movement – or restricting it?

**MARCH  
FOR THE  
ALTERNATIVE:  
JOBS • GROWTH • JUSTICE**



**26 MARCH  
2011,  
LONDON**

All the signs are that the TUC demo on 26 March will be monster. Five hundred coaches have been booked and activists are reporting interest comparable to that in the lead-up to the antiwar march in 2003.

When Brendan Barber announced the demo back in September, I suspect he considered it a way of being seen to do something without committing to too much.

But then the student movement came along and things hotted up. Now the Town Hall occupations and scuffles with the cops have reignited the flame. If the pensions strikes take off, things could boil over.

However, I do still wonder if the TUC is up to old tricks, trying to suppress dissenting views – like it did on the 1981 *March for Jobs* when unemployed workers were thrown off if they criticised officials.

This time, the TUC has hired private security to police the demo and recruited an army of “route stewards” to prevent breakaway groups from peeling off. It has allegedly set up a call centre with the police to report “disorder”.

Whatever the truth behind that one, the bureaucrats are making it difficult for people to join the demo, trying to ban feeder marches and parking the coaches way out in Wembley and Canning Town.

The officials are even trying to “discourage” placards – presumably so the only slogans on the telly and net are its own dull ones: “Say no to unfair and unnecessary spending cuts”... and “Yes” to other cuts?

But Barber will, I suspect, end up like King Canute trying to hold back the sea. It’s far too early to predict what might happen, but one idea that has taken hold is to occupy Hyde Park for a night. Inspired by the heroic scenes in Tahrir Square, it is a great idea.

Others feel Parliament should become a focus for anger and resistance. I’m open to suggestions, so long as we learn the lesson from 2003: it’s not enough to march – we need to follow it up with sustained and coordinated action, leading up to a general strike to bring down the government.

## ★ ANTI-CUTS

# Anti-cuts protesters occupy town halls

**Jeremy Drinkall**

In scenes not witnessed since the poll tax rebellion, angry protesters have besieged town halls all across Britain.

In Lambeth, south London, hundreds of protesters, including children and pensioners, crowded into the Town Hall. When security lied and told them the public gallery was full, they ignored them and went in anyway.

This was too much for councillors, who promptly left the room, while demonstrators took over and held our own “people’s assembly” to plan further resistance.

In an act of mindless revenge, Lambeth’s Labour group also suspended its one councillor to vote

against the budget, Kingsley Abrams.

In Leeds the council moved its meeting to 1pm in a bid to outmanoeuvre protesters, but all in vain because angry campaigners still occupied the chamber.

In Southampton, protesters occupied the chamber, while in Bristol the police were called to clear the public gallery, shackling several anti-cuts demonstrators.

These scenes have been repeated across the UK.

The protest movement is magnificent, but it must now turn to direct action – strikes and occupations. In Birmingham and Manchester unions are preparing for council-wide ballots. Let’s now keep up the pressure and defend every job and service with militant action.

## Stop the rush to academies

**Rachel Archer, NUT**

Many head teachers and governors are rushing to apply for academy status to escape school budget cuts.

But this would change staff’s collective bargaining and union recognition rights. In fact Michael Gove is making this a precondition before granting academy status.

Teachers at Chestnut Grove in Wandsworth led a day’s strike against plans to turn it into an academy.

Meanwhile, Tower Hamlets and Camden NUT are balloting for borough-wide strike action against cuts.

We need to spread the strikes across London and the country, calling on students and parents to join us in the fight to save our schools.

## Student march supports teacher

Hundred of students demonstrated in support of sacked maths teacher Amerjit Virdee, who had worked at Villiers school in Ealing, West London for 29 years. The students shouted: “Sack Ms Strang” (the head teacher).

Student Priya Soroay told socialist youth group REVOLUTION: “It felt extremely good and something to be proud of.”

The revolt, which quickly spread to parents, led to the suspension of the unpopular head and a review of

Amerjit’s case. Teachers at the school had already organised a strike last December over the bullying head.

This is an excellent example of solidarity - an injury to one is an injury to all, and it is important that the movement stands together to prevent victimisation and persecution of activists and supporters.

Priya’s full interview and videos of the action are at <http://tinyurl.com/5vhtrxb>

# Strike against the pension robbery

**Luke Cooper, Sussex UCU**

Public sector pensions – from education to local government to the civil service – are under attack. The Hutton Report (see box) on pensions is due to be published before the 23 March Budget but some of the proposals have been released.

Pensions are becoming a key battle in the fight against the Con-Dem cuts.

In November the NUT proposed a campaign of co-ordinated strikes but since then has gone silent; similarly the PCS union has not moved forward.

## UCU strike

Lecturers in further and higher education are set to strike during Budget week and in advance of the huge TUC demo on 26 March to defend their

## Hutton's pension attack

The government has already announced higher contributions from the workers, lower ones from the bosses and an increase in the retirement age. In the words of the NUT: "Pay more – Work longer – Get less".

Lord Hutton has already proposed proposes workers should up their contribution to the pension scheme from 6.4% to 9.4%: i.e. a 3% pay cut or, with inflation running at over 4%, a 7% real pay cut; and that retiring at 60 is no longer "feasible". By 2020 all workers will be expected to work until they are 66. The government plans for this to creep up to 68, while the bosses' organisation CBI wants a leap to 70 by 2030.

And because pensions will be linked to the lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate of inflation, they will depreciate – by as much as £10,000 over the average retirement period.

pensions, oppose a derisory 0.4 per cent pay offer when inflation is standing at 10 times that amount, and demand job security, as more colleges and universities force their workforce onto short-term contracts.

These strikes should also act as a beacon to the trade union movement, as too many TU leaderships remain sitting on their hands, stifling proposals for action against the cuts.

This presents an opportunity

for the student movement that shook Britain over the past few months to build links with education workers. By joining them on the picket lines and organising student strikes and solidarity occupations, they can unite in action that will be critical in the fight against the coalition government.

## Ministerial lies

Ministers will try to attack lecturers as 'greedy' and recycle the lies about 'gold-plated' public sector pensions, in an attempt to divide us. In the student movement, too, the discredited NUS has still equivocated on whether it will support the action.

The students, along with the growing anti-cuts movement, need to shout loud and clear: we stand united with the college and university workers!

# Rank and file movement founded in Unite

**Billy McKean, Unite**

A new rank and file group has formed inside Unite, Britain's largest union. Unite Grassroots Left emerged from the campaign to elect Jerry Hicks as Unite General Secretary.

In the end Hicks came second with 53,000 votes with the official "left" Len McCluskey winning.

Twelve Grassroots Left supporting shop stewards are standing for election to the union's executive this month. A national conference will follow



**Jerry Hicks from Unite**

on 9 April to officially form the new grouping.

Workers Power argues that Grassroots Left offers an opportunity to break with broad leftism, the strategy of

electing left-wing officials, which has led to countless disappointments as they abandon fighting policies once in office. We fight for the following:

- The annual election and recallability of all officials, who should be paid the average wage of the workers they represent.
- Workers' control over all negotiations and industrial action through mass meetings and elected strike committees.
- Strikes and occupations to stop all cuts – with the officials' backing where possible, without where necessary.
- Defy the anti-union laws – solidarity action with any workers or union prosecuted under these laws.
- Workers' control of production, including hiring and firing.
- Nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of all firms making cuts.
- A rank and file movement in Unite and cross-union.

More on Unite Grassroots Left <http://tinyurl.com/5u8l7sh>

# Benefits overhaul will punish unemployed and the disabled

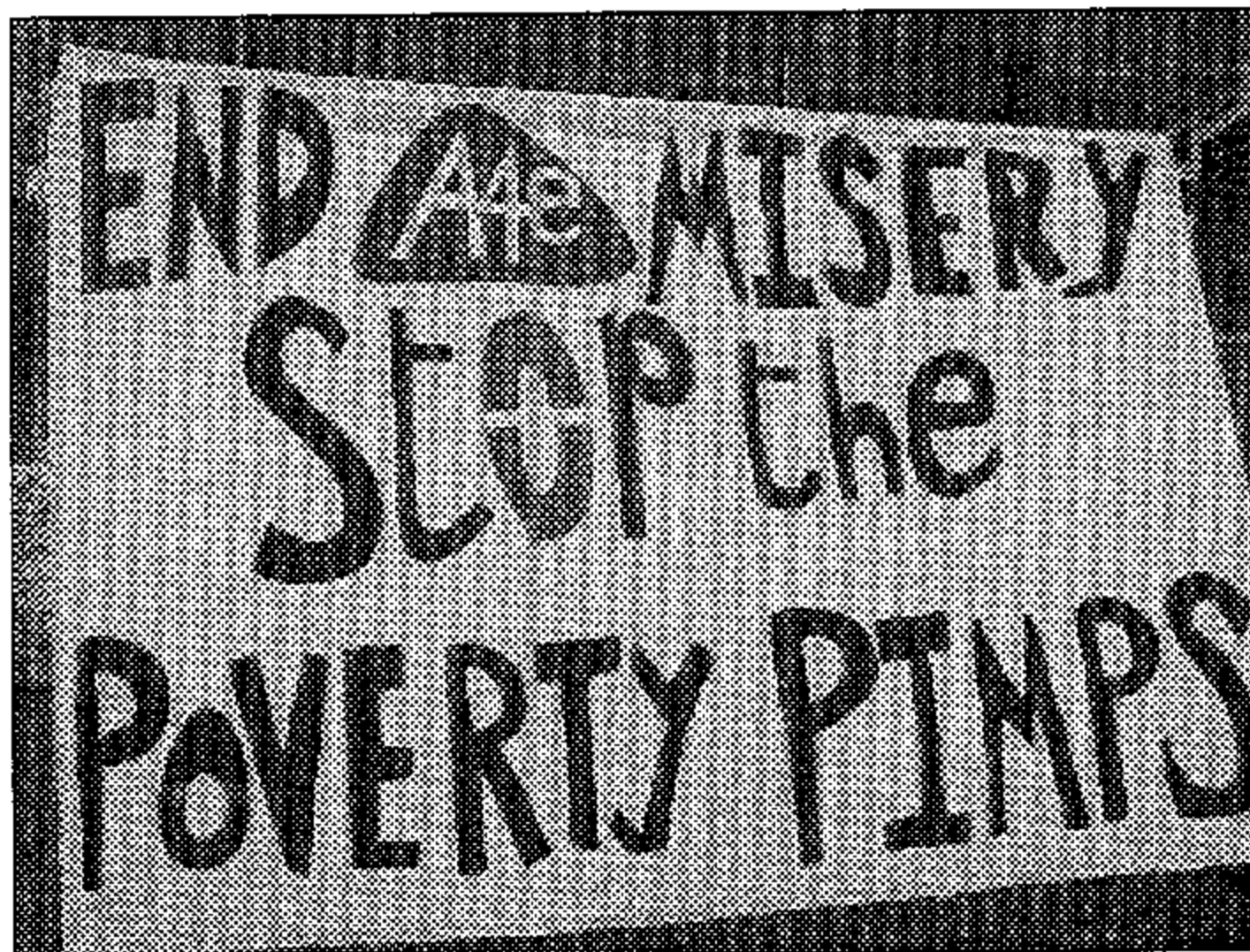
Keith Spencer

The government has stepped up its war on the poor. Works and Pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith has outlined plans for a universal credit to replace the various existing benefits, while the government has ended its "consultation" on reforming disability payments.

The Tories and right-wing press have complained for years about the burgeoning cost of welfare and how the UK is full of long-term unemployed.

In fact during the height of the boom in 2005-6, nearly 75% of the working population was in work – the highest figure ever.

The Institute for Financial Studies (IFS) found that the new system will lead to 1.4 million people losing out, 2.5 million will not be affected, and another 2.5 million will gain by an average



Demonstration against "poverty pimp" firms, which make money from unemployed and disabled people's misery

of a few pounds a week - hardly an incentive to work.

In addition, there will be loss of benefits if someone doesn't turn up for an interview, take a job or fails to do unpaid community service – without any right to appeal.

The government also wants to cut disability living allowance costs by 20% by introducing far tougher work capability assessment (WCA) tests. Currently claimants are making 8,000 appeals a week against WCA decisions, with 40 per cent suc-

ceeding. Yet the Department of Work and Pensions is feeding the press fantastical stories about "97% of disability claimants are fit for work" (Daily Mail).

The One Month Before Heartbreak campaign and groups such as Disabled People Against the Cuts and Black Triangle are organising resistance to the government's plans, particularly the use of private sector firms such as Atos, which carries out medical assessments, or A4E, which runs courses for the DWP.

The real aim of these reforms is to force people into low-paid, part-time, flexible work. We should have a simplified benefit system but one that provides a good standard of living for the disabled and unemployed, rather than the poverty and harassment they now face.

# Con-Dem cuts force domestic violence refuges to close

Joy Macready

Government cuts to council budgets will lead to more victims of domestic violence dying at the hands of their abusers.

More than half of domestic violence services across the country do not know if they will remain open after March.

A Women's Aid survey has found that only a quarter of refuges have had their contracts extended beyond March, while more than a third face possi-

ble closure. Yet, the number of women killed by a violent partner jumped from 72 in 2007-8 to 102 in 2008-9 – an increase of 42 per cent.

The Ministry of Justice has pledged only £3.5 million to Rape Crisis services while councils cut far more.

Liverpool has cut its entire funding to Rape Crisis, while three domestic violence services in Devon are fighting to stay open. Services in Hull, North Somerset and Notting-

hamshire have all been warned funding may end in 2011.

Also the Welfare Reform Bill will mean that the state will no longer support mothers with young children leaving a relationship – even a violent one.

The Con-Dem coalition is destroying women's refuges and making it financially impossible for mothers to bring up children on their own. The labour movement must put women's rights at the very top of their agenda.



**1 in 4**

women are affected directly by domestic violence at some point in their lives.



# The big Tory sell-off

Jeremy Drinkall

*"We are not the same old Conservative Party. We have changed. We are a party for the mainstream majority."*

This is how David Cameron lied his way into Downing Street. But the White Paper *Open Public Services* shows the new, "caring" Conservatives even more hell-bent on privatisation than they were in the 1980s.

As Cameron said in the *Daily Telegraph*, the White Paper will create "a new presumption that public services should be open to a range of providers competing to offer a better service". Instead of having to justify introducing competition, the state will have to justify "why it should ever operate a monopoly."

Every service – apart from the judiciary and national security – could be sold off to anyone who "values the importance of our public service ethos". And what is the Coalition's ethos? Well, judging by council, NHS and education budgets, it is to cut provision, wages and jobs.

## Profits

Cameron and his deputy Nick Clegg will stress how their proposals, along with £250 million in a Big Society bank, could provide capital for small charities and employee buyouts, to make services more local and provide greater choice. But their real aim is to boost big business profits.

Outsourcers like Serco and Capita,



already in control of public contracts worth billions, will gain the biggest share. If they bid to operate a service and undercut the public sector – by lowering wages and worsening conditions – no one will be able to stop them taking over.

According to Unison, we will already fork out "more than £217 billion worth of repayments between now and 2033/34 on just £64 billion of PFI projects". The White Paper could multiply this astronomically.

## Waste

Nor does privatisation reduce waste. Independent Sector Treatment Centres charge 11 per cent more than the NHS for operations. They are also paid for a pre-set number of operations, though they carry out on average only 85 per cent of them. Likewise, privatisation will increase bureaucracy, as staff have to draw up and manage tens of thousands of contracts.

And as for quality improvements, Capita chief Paul Pindar asked Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude last November if "there were ways that services could be delivered differently – albeit to a more appropriate standard than had maybe been procured – with a view to saving money". In short, could he drop performance targets in order to keep up profit margins? Maude assured him he could.

## Resistance

Union leaders have promised a "bare knuckle fight" over privatisation. Mass and coordinated strike action is needed. But will they deliver?

Industrial action against privatisation is technically illegal – though we can strike against the effects of it. The *Daily Mail* recently reported: "A secret 'war plan' to prevent a general strike has been drawn up by ministers – with thousands of union busting workers lined up to cross militant picket lines."

We need to fight fire with fire and completely overhaul our approach to defending our gains, or we will lose all the public services we have won since 1945.

- Labour MPs – block the Bill and support all resistance to privatisation.
- Anticuts groups – mobilise mass public opposition and militant direct action to halt the profiteers.
- Unions – strike together to stop the sell-off, defying the anti-union laws where necessary.

## 50,000 jobs to go in NHS massacre

By Mark Booth, Unison Health

The TUC, has obtained figures from 185 hospitals, 126 primary care, 23 ambulance and 54 mental health trusts showing 53,150 NHS job cuts in the next four years.

North Staffordshire is losing 22.5 per cent of its staff; East Lancashire will cut 1,013 full-time posts, including almost 50 doctors and dental staff and 270 nurses, midwives and health visitors; while up to 1,600 jobs are to go at the Heart of England in Birmingham.

This gives the lie to David Cameron's

boast that he would "cut the deficit, not the NHS". The government is forcing through £20 billion of cuts over the next five years, masquerading as "efficiency savings", a 4 per cent reduction in the NHS budget every year. This will devastate the NHS and lead to more infections, complications and deaths.

The Con Dems won't be ditching senior managers or management consultants, which cost £350 million a year. In fact they requested an extra £1.8 billion to pay for the reorganisation. They will slash essential admin workers. As the British Medical Association point out, "even cuts to backroom

staff impact on clinical workers who have to pick up the administrative burden".

These cuts, coupled with massive privatisation, will spell the end of the NHS as we know it.

We need to act now. Keep Our NHS Public has campaigning groups up and down the country. If they can link up with anti-cuts groups and union branches, we can build a movement to defend the NHS. But while fighting every cut locally, we need a national campaign, coordinating protests and strikes, to kill the Health and Social Care Bill.

# Women on the frontline

Women bear the brunt of the Tory cuts with job losses in the public sector and attacks on health and social care services for children and families. **Joy Macready** examines the attacks and also looks at when women fought back against oppression and organised International Women's Day – one hundred years ago this month

DOMINIC RAAB, the Conservative MP for Esher and Walton, in Surrey, recently called on men to “burn their briefs” in protest against “flagrant discrimination”.

“From cradle to grave, men are getting a raw deal. Men work longer hours, die earlier but retire later than women,” he said.

How could one person be so wrong? Women are paid significantly less than men, do most of the housework and more than two-thirds are not eligible for a state pension because of disrupted careers due to childcare breaks.

Women in the UK are paid 15.5% less than men, a figure which jumps to 32% when comparing women's part-time hourly rate to men's full-time hourly rate. This figure is significant as almost four times as many women work part-time as men.

Women have to combine work and bringing up children: nine out of 10 lone parents are female. They still do 82% of the housework – which is unpaid labour and contributes to incredibly long working hours.

And the Con-Dem government is making the situation worse: they have shelved plans to implement Section 78 of the Equality Act, which would have forced employers to implement equal pay, and are forcing women and men to work longer with plans to increase the pension age from 60 for women and 65 for men to 66 for both by 2020.

Research by the Fawcett Society calculates that last June's Emergency Budget will hit women almost three times as hard as men, and the Spending Review, twice as hard.

Of the £16bn set to be raised in direct tax, benefit, and pension changes in the Budget and Spending Review, £11bn (69%) will come from women. Overall, of the £8.5bn additional tax credit, welfare savings and public sector pension contributions raised in the Spending Review, £5.7bn will come from women (67%).

It is the double burden that women shoulder under capitalism – in the workplace and as carers at home – which is why they suffer disproportionately compared to men.



## Unemployment

These cuts come at a time when women's employment is increasingly insecure. In the three months to December 2010 the government's official unemployment rate (Office of National Statistics, Labour Market Bulletin February 2011) reached 2.49 million, with 1.46 million men and 1.03 million women unemployed (up 12,000 on September 2010).

The number of women claiming Jobseekers Allowance (the main unemployment benefit)

Women are nearly  
**3x**  
more likely to lose  
their public sector  
job than male  
colleagues

has risen for seven months in a row and now stands at 449,200 – the highest since 1996. There has also been a 50 per cent increase in the number of lone parents claiming JSA with women being the vast majority of the nearly 80,000 single parents claiming.

The 500,000 jobs earmarked for cuts in the public sector – where women make up 65% of the employment – mean that women are more likely to lose their jobs. A higher proportion of women are employed in the public sector because it was a secure and flexible employer – as many women must balance work with caring responsibilities in the home – and the type of work reflected the traditional roles done by women such as caring.

The GMB union has found that women council workers are nearly three times more

likely to lose their jobs than male colleagues. The union's study of job losses from 193 councils found that about 84,000 women face unemployment, compared with just under 28,000 men.

Young women are being hit hardest. In the south-west, the unemployment rate among 18- to 24-year-old women has almost trebled, from 5% to 14% since early 2008, while it has almost doubled in the north-west, Yorkshire, West Midlands, the south-east and Scotland.



## Social services

The Spending Review announced that Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which replaces Incapacity Benefits, will be withdrawn after one year from those who are currently incapable of work but for whom there is an expectation of eventual return to work if they have savings, assets or partners who work.

This is expected to affect one million people, especially women who are caring for a relative as three-quarters of those receiving Carer's Allowance are female.

The benefit is worth about £54 a week but cannot be claimed if a carer earns more than £100 a week in a job or claims certain other benefits. The effect is to keep carers and

# fighting the cuts

the people they are helping in poverty.

Women's greater contribution to caring responsibilities also make them more vulnerable to cuts in services for children, the disabled and older people, since women are more likely than men to compensate for losses in such services by their own unpaid labour. The nominal value of unpaid work of carers is put at about £60 billion a year – most of it done by women.

A million more women than men claim housing benefit so the proposed cuts will plunge more women and families into poverty.

On top of all these cuts to direct financial support from the state, women are more likely to be hit by cuts in local services upon which they are heavily reliant, particularly social care, which will be affected by the cuts in local council budget.

One of the areas is funding for wraparound childcare for school-age children, such as breakfast clubs and after-school childcare. This is critical for working parents, and cuts in services or increases in charges could mean that it is no longer possible for parents to work.

Since schools have seen just a 0.1% real increase in their budget, and will be required to pick up other functions that are no longer delivered by



local authorities, they will struggle to meet the shortfall.



## Legal services

According to the Justice Department's own assessment of the impact of reforms, legal aid cuts (£600m cut to family law and divorce funding) will hit women the hardest.

Family law, including divorce and child residence cases, would no longer be eligible for legal aid other than where domestic violence, forced marriage or international child abduction is proven. In 2006, 62% of all applications for legal aid were by women.

Women suffering psychological abuse are disqualified under the legal aid reforms, as the new rules define domestic

violence as woman being at risk of physical harm.

This will make it much more difficult for women to leave abusive partners.

## Fight back

Although the cards are stacked against us, women have great resilience and are proven to be determined fighters, as shown by the school, college and university demonstrations and the significant involvement in the anti-cuts movement by unions whose members are made up by a majority of women, i.e. Unison (1 million women members, 77%), PCS (60%), and NUT (76%).

One example of this strength is the mainly women workers at the Lambeth One O'clock clubs, who were faced with the sack and being forced to reapply if they want new jobs. The council's plans would have destroyed a much valued service for young children, but also remove a centre of trade union strength of almost 100 per cent union density, paving the way for cuts later. The Unison members led a brilliant campaign that resulted in all of the jobs in Adventure Playgrounds and One O'Clock Clubs being saved.

This is just one example – there are many more. We have the strength to stand up together against these cuts and to fight for our jobs and services.

## How International Women's Day was founded in 1911

Born at a time of great social turbulence and crisis, when the imperialist nations were gearing up for world war, International Women's Day comes from a tradition of radicalism and revolutionary spirit.

As early as 1896, German revolutionary Clara Zetkin was arguing for the inclusion of women in the political struggle of the working class. She argued that the root of women's oppression lies within the family – that there is an inseparable connection between the social position of women and private property in the means of production. Without a socialist revolution,



Clara Zetkin

women's liberation could not be achieved and, without involving women in the class struggle, the socialist revolution itself would be impossible.

In 1910, Zetkin came to the Second International Conference of Socialist Women with the proposal that Working Women's Day become an international event. In 1911, more than one million women and men attended rallies in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden under the slogan: "The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism."

Since then, women have demonstrated and protested on International Women's Day against discrimination and for political and social equality.



## Celebrate 100 years of International Women's Day

Speakers on women's struggles in the UK and around the world

Thursday 10 March, 7pm, University College London, Chadwick G07 Gower street, WC1E 6BT





imperialism in the dock  
**MARCUS HALABY**

## Islamists back Egypt's military

For decades, Hosni Mubarak justified his rule by claiming that democratisation would see Egypt fall into the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood, the banned Islamist opposition movement. Western governments and media concurred, raising few objections in 2007 when he had 8,000 Brotherhood supporters arrested.

No surprise then that on the first of 18 days of protest that brought down Mubarak, Egypt's interior ministry blamed it on the Brotherhood, even



Muslim Brotherhood's  
Essam al-Erian

though its leaders played so small a role in the protests that they drew open criticism from its youth members.

On 28 January, the fourth day of the protests, former US negotiator Martin Indyk even warned of "dramatic negative ramifications" if "the regime falls, and the Muslim Brotherhood takes control of Egypt and breaks the peace treaty with Israel".

This threat was one supposed reason why US President Obama opposed Mubarak's immediate resignation for as long as possible, in favour of a "managed transition" to free elections in September.

Yet far from just waiting for their opportunity to seize power, the Brotherhood were among the first to offer to negotiate with Mubarak. They clearly see their goal as a share in government though a deal with elements of the old regime. They also called for support for the army in the early days of the uprising.

To emphasise its reliability to the army, its spokesman Essam al-Erian announced on 18 February that it would "not impose its view" on Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, and that this decision belongs "to the entire Egyptian people". But just who in Egypt supports this treaty, apart from Mubarak's cronies in the military?

The real threat from the Islamists is not that it will hijack the democracy movement to impose an Islamic state, but that the Brotherhood add its weight to the attempts of Egypt's military to demobilise the masses and cheat them of the democratic rights they fought and died for.

And there will be no shortage of Western pundits praising its moderation when it does it.

## ★ INTERNATIONAL

# Left gains as Fianna fails in Irish elections

Bernie McAdam

Fianna Fail has been dumped out of office after polling a historic low. The bad news is that the openly capitalist party Fine Gael looks set to form a coalition with the Labour Party, which polled 20 per cent, its highest vote ever.

Despite talk of renegotiating the IMF/EU deal, the Fine Gael led government will pursue the pro cuts agenda demonstrating its servility to the IMF bail out and Brussels. The Labour Party has already voted for the Finance Bill, which binds the next government to a programme of severe cuts as demanded by Brussels and the IMF.

Sinn Fein also polled well on the back of its opposition to the cuts but held out for coalition with several pro cuts parties. In the North they are in coalition of repression and cuts with the DUP.

### United Left Alliance

The good news is the significant electoral breakthrough for the United Left Alliance. Joe Higgins (Socialist Party), Clare Daly (SP), Joan Collins and Richard Boyd Barrett (People before Profit), Seamus Healy (Workers and Unemployed Action Group).

The ULA offered a principled alternative to all the establishment parties that believed workers should be paying for the excesses of the bankers and the bond markets. It refused to do any deals or support any coalition that would force workers to pay for the current crisis.

The new left members of parliament (TDs) have an opportunity to lead an immediate fight back against the vicious attacks on workers.

It will also raise the possibility of building a new anti-capitalist party in Ireland or as Joe Higgins has promised a new political party of the left.

Clearly an electoral challenge isn't enough; a new party must call for a



Fine Gael leader Enda Kenny

mass movement of resistance to defeat the cuts. A new party will also have to democratically decide on an action programme for turning the immediate struggles into a fight for working class power and socialism.

At the heart of such a programme must be the call for mass strikes culminating in a general strike to scupper the attempts by a coalition government to make us pay for their system. We need to build councils of action to democratically co-ordinate the strikes and not leave the trade union leadership to sell out.

### All-Ireland party

We also need to organise on an all-Ireland basis. Any new socialist party in Ireland has to address the national question and call for the withdrawal of Britain and the dismantling of the sectarian state in the north.

Central to any new programme is the fight against women's oppression. The recession will undoubtedly hit women the hardest. We must be in the forefront of the fight for women's rights in particular for free abortion on demand.

Last but not least a new anti-capitalist party should fight for a real workers government based on democratic workers' councils and protected by a workers' militia that can overturn capitalism once and for all.

Now is the time for a revolutionary alternative – fight for a Workers' Republic!

• [fifthinternational.org/Ireland](http://fifthinternational.org/Ireland)

# Wisconsin – we're here to lead the charge!

Jeff Albertson

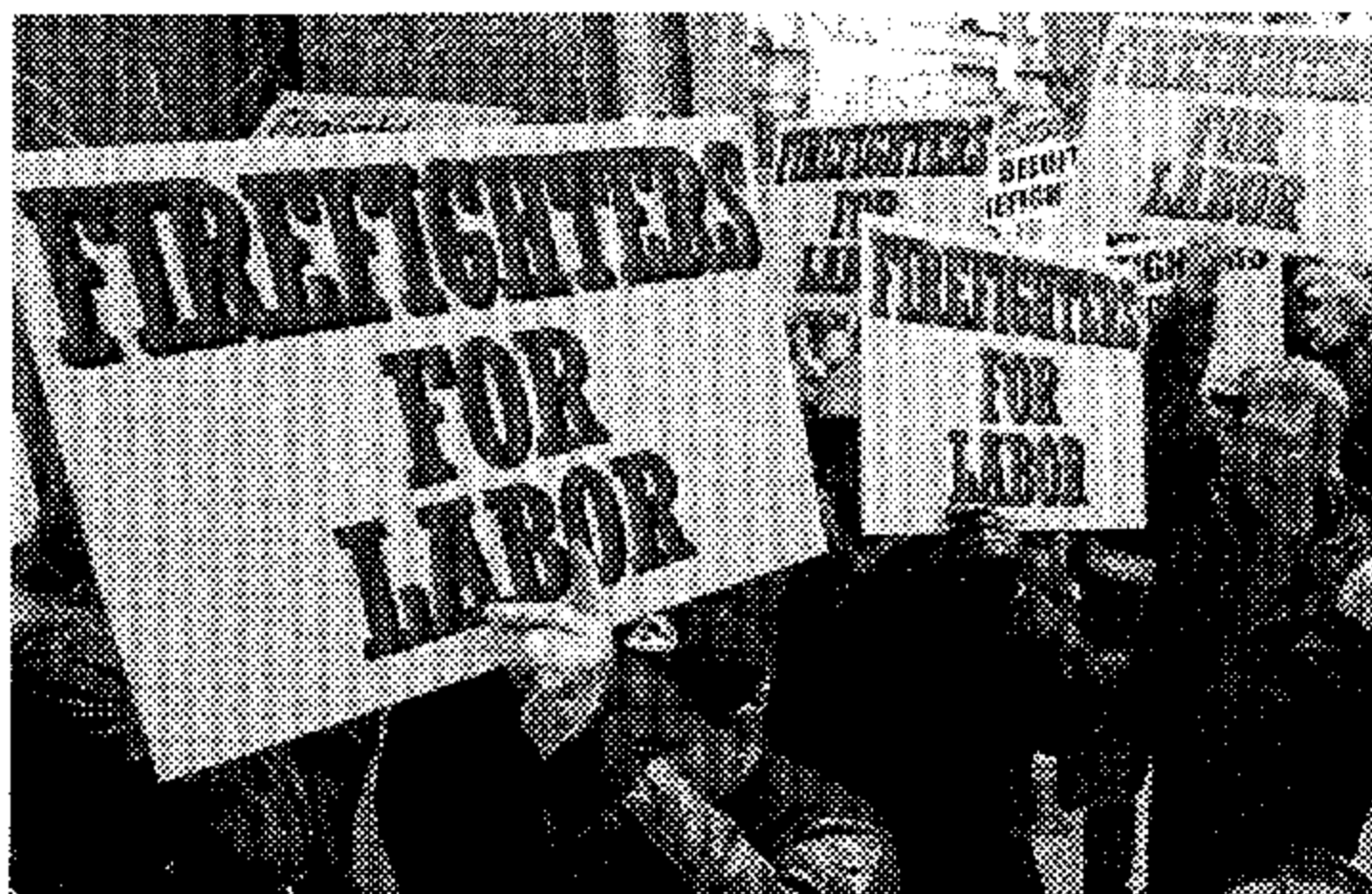
All across the US, the ruling class is attempting to offload the effects of the recession onto the backs of working people. The main target of their offensive has been public sector workers, whose organisations are widely considered the last bastion of trade unionism in the country.

The victory of the Republicans in the last national elections saw rabid cost-cutting politicians voted in throughout the US. In Wisconsin, this meant the election of Scott Walker as Governor. A social-conservative, anti-union demagogue, with close financial ties to the Tea Party movement, Walker has declared outright war on public sector unions, public education and the working class more generally since taking office last month.

Before Walker took office – that is, before he pushed through a \$140 million tax cut for the rich – Wisconsin's budget was in surplus. Once in office he started claiming serious problems with the budget to cover up his policy of cuts. Public-sector pay, benefits, and retirement funds, and the unions who bargain for them, were targeted as the culprits for the alleged over spending.

His 'budget repair bill' would limit collective bargaining for public employees to matters of wages, with working conditions and benefits being off the table for discussion.

Also, it would make it illegal for the union to automatically deduct dues from workers' paycheques, making voluntary con-



Firefighters and teamsters supported their colleagues recalling the old Wobblies slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all".

tributions the norm instead. Bargaining units would have to vote to re-certify each year.

To add insult to injury, the bill asks for substantial wage concessions, demanding workers contribute even more of their already scant paycheques toward health benefits and pensions. Since public sector workers in the Wisconsin cannot collect Social Security and because their pay is kept low already to allow for their pension plans to be worth anything when they retire, such proposals will push many more into poverty.

Also included in the bill are drastic cuts to 'Badgercare', the state's health-care program for low-income families, and 65,000 people are expected to be dropped from Medicaid.

## Seize the Capitol

What happened next surprised the US: mass demonstrations against the bill and a complete outpouring of support from communities, youth and students, and the working class. Seventy thousand people, by far the largest demonstration in

decades in the region, converged on the downtown area, and thousands took over the State Capitol building, pledging to occupy it until the bill is defeated.

Teachers, teaching assistants and students led the way. Many private sector workers in unions, such as the Teamsters and steel workers, joined the fight.

There is a strong feeling of class solidarity, expressed in statements by a great number of those in attendance. Statements by Mahlon Mitchell, president of the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin, ignited the crowd. "We could have stood idly back – taken a couple of steps back, and say, 'let them fight it'...[but] we didn't do that. Our house is burning down, ladies and gentlemen, and we're here to lead the charge. We're going to go in first."

President of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO Phil Neuenfeldt told a crowd of thousands: "We understand in Wisconsin that when you do an injury to one, you do an injury to all," reciting the famous motto of the Indus-

trial Workers of the World.

The movement was so impressive that even the Democrats were pushed into opposition. Fourteen Democrat senators fled the state to neighbouring Illinois to make the senate inquorate preventing the bill from becoming law. It has since been passed in the lower assembly but is blocked in the senate until they return.

## The giant awakens

The mass demonstrations, student walkouts and occupations in Wisconsin have produced a nationwide effect. From coast to coast, solidarity protests and struggles by public sector workers against their own state's cutbacks have captured the attention of millions.

It is tremendous proof that the US working class and youth are not bereft of fighting spirit, that class struggle exists here as much as anywhere else, and that there is a determined desire to resist, to fight back against the capitalist offensive.

Now the stakes are even higher, with tens of thousands rallying in Wisconsin and Ohio, with solidarity protests across the country. The South Central Federation of Labor, which represents 45,000 workers, passed a resolution supporting a general strike before the bill is passed.

But some of the union leaders are obstructing action or undermining the occupation.

Union branches must fight for a general strike across Wisconsin – clearly the support is there and such a strike movement could spread like wildfire. Now is the time to turn words into deeds.

# British imperialism's bloody history in the Middle East

Mark Booth

UK Prime Minister David Cameron flew into Cairo after Hosni Mubarak was forced out, saying he wanted to be the first Western politician there since the revolution. What he did not mention was that he was flanked by British arms dealers on their way to the huge IDEX weapons fair in Abu Dhabi.

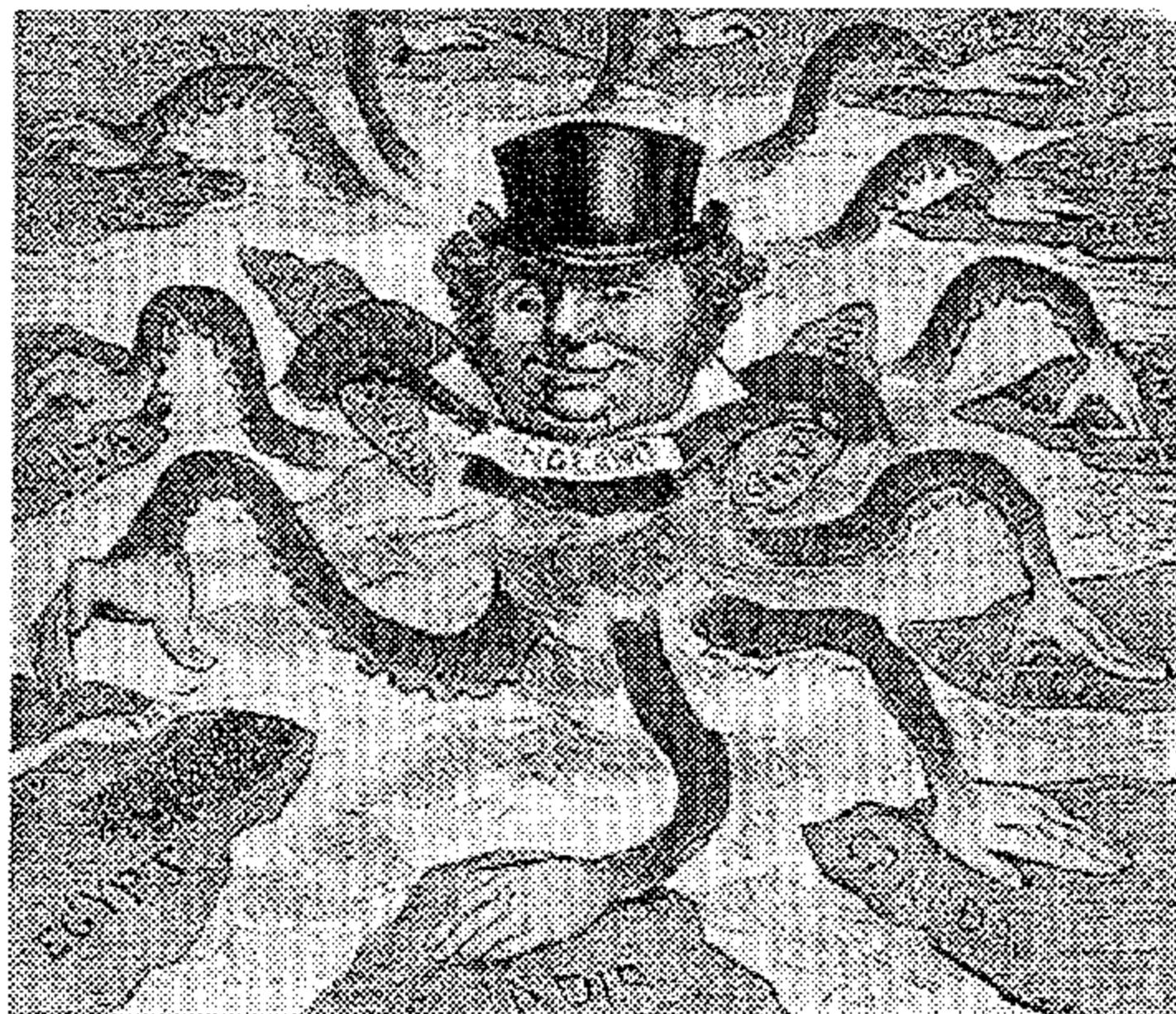
Britain exports millions of pounds worth of military and crowd control equipment to repressive dictatorships every year – and the government guarantees these deals through its strategic export controls. This includes explicitly military hardware, as well as controlled civilian equipment that can be used against unarmed people, such as torture implements and surveillance tools.

This industry is very profitable for the UK. There were 93 UK companies at the IDEX fair, and last year the UK made just under £400 million in military sales and another £1.8 billion in controlled civilian sales.

Successive governments have defended this trade, including covering up bribes. The government of Tony Blair – now Middle East peace envoy and a friend of Hosni Mubarak – dropped an investigation into arms manufacturer BAE Systems, which was accused of bribing Saudi officials to grease an arms deal.

## Britain's butchery

But Britain's bloody hands have been on the Middle East and North Africa for nearly 200 years. The British Empire not only carved up the region, agreeing its artificial borders



**A cartoon from 1888 depicting Britain as an octopus with his tentacles seizing countries all over the world**

with other imperialist powers like France, but dominated it economically.

When Egypt became bankrupt in the 1870s, its economy was effectively taken over by the European powers, with Britain controlling about 80 per cent of the debt. In 1882, when a nationalist revolt threatened to overturn European domination, Britain sent warships and bombarded Alexandria for days, killing thousands, while a British expeditionary force landed and slaughtered a weak Egyptian army.

In the early twentieth century, Britain helped create new client states including the little made-up monarchies in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. After the First World War, Britain and France carved Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

The British government also provided support for the emerging Zionist movement, with

Lord Balfour issuing his famous declaration in 1918 promising a "Jewish national home" in Palestine. Britain's pro-Zionist policy would ultimately lead to the creation of Israel and the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians in 1948.

## Repressing the Iraqis

When Britain occupied Iraq after the First World War, its army bloodily repressed an uprising in 1920. Villages were burnt, rebels shot and livestock seized. Rebel strongholds were shelled heavily and bombed from the air. The RAF and artillery units used gas shells – the first time chemical weapons were used against the Iraqi people. Winston Churchill, who became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1921, said in 1919 that he was "strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes".

The British pioneered the use of air power as a cheap method of putting down uprisings

against colonial rule. Wing Commander Arthur Harris, later to become as "Bomber" Harris for his destruction of German cities, said of aerial bombardment: "within 45 minutes a full sized village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured."

The West's domination of Iran dates to the 1810s, when Britain captured land from Persia and forced it to sign a humiliating peace treaty. In the 1920s British armed forces helped install a dictator who was later overthrown, leading to a nationalist government led by Mohammad Mosaddegh. Mosaddegh himself was overthrown in 1953 in a coup supported by Britain and the United States, after he threatened to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

Even after the Second World War, Britain continued to play a nefarious role in North Africa. It supported the right of defeated Italian imperialism to resume control of its former colonies in Libya and part of Somalia, as well as France's domination over Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Britain's own domination over Egypt would continue until ousted by a popular revolution in 1952.

Britain's influence in the region declined by the 1970s, but its role in supporting the US-dominated regional order still holds back the fight for democracy in the Arab world. This is why the Arab masses take up so readily the politics of anti-imperialism, to free their countries from the grip of the Western powers and their puppets that have so abused and manipulated them.

# The battle is on for the future of Libya

Simon Hardy

Muammar Abu al-Gadafi, Libya's brutal dictator, has used his armed forces to slaughter pro-democracy protesters, a vicious act unseen in Tunisia or Egypt. It is estimated that thousands have been killed or wounded. Top officials of the biggest Tripoli hospitals, who were said to be loyal to Gadafi, are understating the casualty numbers.

In Tripoli, his forces attacked unarmed demonstrators with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. Gadafi is battling for control with those police and army units still loyal to him.

The regime was built on a massive repressive apparatus for a country of only 6.4 million people - Gadafi had at his disposal not only a 45,000-strong army and the police, but also a 74,000-strong array of special forces and militiamen. In this respect, Libya is similar to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf petro monarchies, where the oil royalties are used to arm and fund the armed wings of the state.

In addition, a large part of the working class - the most dangerous social force for all tyrants - consists of non-citizens who can be expelled at will. Gadafi purposefully recruited foreign workers to run the economy. There are thought to be more than 1.5 million Egyptians working in Libya, 50,000 Bangladeshis, 15,000 Indians and a large number of Pakistanis. Over 30,000 Turks make up the bulk of the Libyan construc-



tion and engineering industry. There are also many workers from sub-Saharan African states. Many of these workers are now fleeing the country.

## Resistance grows

But Gaddafi's iron grip on Libya is beginning to slip. It appears that sections of the army, and even the airforce, have broken from the brutal regime when ordered to attack their own people. Major-General Suleiman Mahmoud, commander of the armed forces in Tobruk, told Al Jazeera: "We are on the side of the people." In the east of Libya and along the coast, the forces of the democratic revolution have triumphed. The popular forces have liberated the cities of Tobruk, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Misurata, Derna and Bayda. And now these forces are closing in on Tripoli, the regime's stronghold.

Despite the revolution hanging in the balance, a 'humanitarian' military intervention by US, EU or UN forces would be a catastrophe. The real purpose of such an intervention would be to 'restore order' - i.e. smother the living forces of the revolution and defend the 'rights' of the western multinationals to control the country's oil wealth. In the end, it would most likely condemn the country to the hell-like existence seen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Obviously, the immediate task is to root out and destroy the dictator and his entourage of mass murderers, and to liberate Tripoli. But the youth, the workers and the rebel soldiers need to make sure that the fruits of the revolution are not stolen by the millionaires or elements of the old regime who went over to the revolution only at the

11th hour - those that want to maintain their power over the masses.

## A revolutionary start

The popular forces that have mobilised against Gadafi and formed action committees should expand these into councils of recallable delegates to run the liberated cities. Likewise they should form a popular militia, together with the rebel soldiers, to defend themselves against reactionary forces. When Gaddafi is dethroned, a provisional government - based on the councils of the risen people and the workers (including the Egyptian, African and other 'foreign' workers) - must call a sovereign constituent assembly to democratically decide how to run the country.

The workers and revolutionary youth must take the lead in making the revolution permanent, which means that they should not stop until the Libyan millionaires and the foreign multinationals are expropriated, and the economy is planned to assure a decent life for all who live in the country.

In order to achieve this, they need to form a revolutionary workers party, armed with an action programme and a strategy for socialism in Libya, in conjunction with revolutionary forces across the entire region. Together their goal must be a Socialist United States of the Middle East.

The eruption of class struggle in Europe and the US also points to the burning necessity to build a new party of world revolution - a Fifth International.

By Rebecca Anderson

Hundreds of thousands of women took to the streets of 200 Italian cities on 13 February calling for “dignity” and greater rights for women.

The call for respect is due to the country’s Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi constant sexist jibes and the way the media he controls treat women as little more than sex objects.

But it is not just a question of jokes and TV programmes. The world’s media have been full of stories of his personal exploitation of young and under aged women at sex parties. Now he is to go on trial on 6 April,



The gender pay gap in Italy is **16.8%**

But Berlusconi’s sexism is only the tip of the iceberg of the inequality women face in Italy. A recent report on the global gender gap puts Italy 74th out of 134 countries.

# Italy: women and workers march against Berlusconi

charged with paying a 17-year old Moroccan girl and trying to cover it up by abusing his powers as prime minister.

Berlusconi has already faced 106 trials, on charges varying from collusion with the mafia to bribery of police officers and judges. In three of these cases, he used his majority in parliament to force the judiciary to drop the charges. On others, the €174 million he has spent on top lawyers did the trick.

Berlusconi is Italy’s richest man, with personal wealth of \$9 billion, and owner of most of its popular media. He is also a personal friend of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and was one of the few world leaders to stand by Mubarak in his final days in office.

- Women are paid 16.8 per cent less than men
- Fewer than half of women have a job compared to 59 per cent in the European Union.
- Women represent only 21 per cent of government ministers, less than 20 per cent of MPs, 6.8 per cent on the boards of publicly quoted companies and only 3.8 per cent of their CEOs.

But recent months have seen not only the women’s march but also major demonstrations against Berlusconi’s attack on the public services.

If this movement – in which women play an important part – grows then it will be able to drive Gaddafi’s friend from power.

Letter from

# Pakistan

## Strikes grip public sector

Editorial, *Resistance* magazine

The Pakistani ruling class is trying to force the working class to pay the price of the capitalist crisis. They are planning to downsize the workforces in all state owned institutions and eventually to privatise them completely. But over the past month a growing movement of resistance has shaken the country.

The workers of the Pakistan Telecommunications Company, the Water and Power Development Authority, the Post Office, the Steel mills and other sectors, have fought back against the sell offs and sackings. In the Karachi Electric Supply Company, 10,000 workers occupied its headquarters against the firing of 4,500 workers. After a four-day occupation, the bosses reinstated the sacked workers.

The railway workers organised a militant demonstration in Lahore against the proposed loss of 20,000 jobs, marching from the railway headquarters to Alhambra hall on the Mall Road. One of the workers, Rizwan, told *Resistance* magazine: “We are not the ones responsible for the current deficit in the railway. It is the government and the corrupt administration who are responsible”.

This militant demonstration forced the government to announce that they would not sack railways staff although the question of privatisation was left on the table.

### “No option but to fight”

The government is also planning to privatise Pakistan Post. The post workers too are resisting vigorously. One of them – Shahid – told *Resistance* that more than 37,000 jobs are in danger. “We have no other option but to fight,” he said.

In Pakistan International Airlines where 20,000 jobs were threatened workers showed their determination and power, defying the thugs of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party, and won their battle against the government.

There is growing unrest among private sector workers too. Now we need to co-ordinate these strikes and overcome the divisions between different unions by building joint strike committees – with delegates elected by the strikers at mass meetings.

During a time of magnificent upsurge in workers militancy and the exposure of the pro-capitalist character of the Pakistan People’s Party government it is becoming ever clearer workers need their own revolutionary party. That is what we in the Revolutionary Socialist Movement are fighting for.



# Cameron attacks multiculturalism

Politicians have been increasingly using racist language to divert attention from the impact of the economic crisis. Now the UK's Prime Minister has joined in, writes **David Stockton**

IN A recent speech in Munich, David Cameron delivered a frontal attack on what he called "state multiculturalism". The Tory leader was joining with centre-right parties in Europe, who over the past two years have been busy stealing the clothes of growing far right movements.

The global capitalist crisis that broke out in 2008 is the backdrop for this growth in racism across the continent. As unemployment sky-rockets migrants and ethnic minorities become a convenient 'enemy within', a scapegoat for the abject failures of the capitalist system to deliver a decent life for all.

On the one hand, racist feeling will often grow spontaneously in this situation if it isn't challenged by a united working class fightback that takes a clear anti-racist stance. On the other hand, the right wing media, the far right and conservative parties all seek to use race to make political capital.

The result is a growing, concerted offensive on the ethnic minorities of the EU. Islam is a particular target, being attacked for its "non-European" religion and culture and so-called refusal to integrate. But the whole campaign is a cover for outright racism. It



**Cameron's attack on multiculturalism was praised by racists**

is the anti-Semitism of the 21st century.

Racist populist parties, such as the Lega Nord in Italy, Freedom Party in Austria and the semi-fascist Front National in France, spread hysteria about mosques supposedly replacing churches, the 'alien cry' of the muezzin supplanting the pealing of church bells.

Now Cameron, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy are picking up the same themes to divide a popular resistance to cuts.

Its purpose is quite simply to poison the minds of lower middle class and working class people, hard pressed by the crisis, and divert their anger away from

the bankers and job-cutting governments, to scapegoat the Muslims, black people, migrants, and 'potential terrorists'.

No wonder Marine Le Pen, successor to father Jean Marie Le Pen as leader of the Front National, immediately congratulated Cameron on his speech, pointing out her father had criticised multiculturalism for years.

## **Racist attack on multiculturalism**

Cameron defined multiculturalism as "the idea that we should respect different cultures within Britain to the point of allowing them - indeed encouraging them - to live sep-

arate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream."

In fact 'state multiculturalism', as Cameron defines, it is a completely bogus target. It is much like his related demagogic theme that we have to "re-establish control over our borders", as if any Tom, Dick or Harry could just turn up at Heathrow or Dover and stroll in.

Now leaving aside whether there ever was a policy that encouraged religious or ethnic communities 'to live apart' (which governments did this? Thatcher's, Major's, Tony Blair's?), the policy of governments over the past 10 years has been most decidedly integrationist - emphasising the urgent need to 'build social cohesion', launching and funding numerous inter-community projects, and urging migrants to assimilate to existing British culture.

As Arun Kundnani, a senior researcher at the Institute of Race Relations, wrote after Cameron's Munich speech: "Remember, community cohesion is the official race relations policy of this country. The earlier agenda that came out of the Macpherson Report into the racist murder of black youth Stephen Lawrence has been largely abandoned, even as Muslim communities are besieged by anti-terrorist polic-

ing. Racism is no longer recognised as 'institutional'. It is defined, instead, as a fear of the unknown. Thus, Muslims need to make themselves less strange to others, both by becoming more British and through more mixing with other groups."

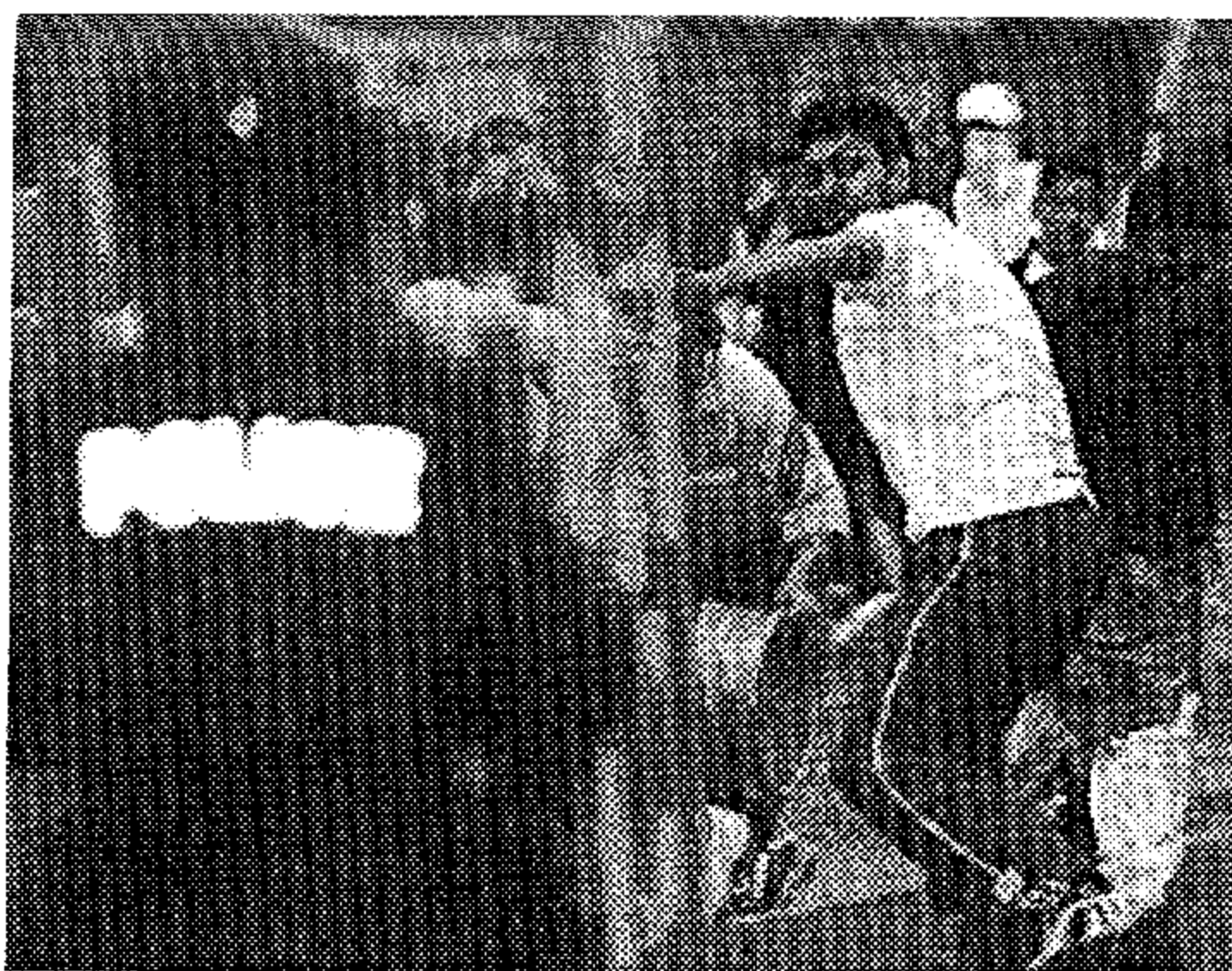
And indeed Cameron's speech targeted the Muslim communities in Britain. He accused them of stubbornly refusing to integrate in to British society and adopt "our values", and of bringing up extremist children who then resort to terrorism like the 7/7 London bombs. He said he and his generation of Tories did not have "the hang-ups of the past" and that "people today don't worry that criticising multiculturalism is coded racism."

On the same day the fascist English Defence League (EDL) marched in Luton "against Islamic extremism".

Cameron began his attacks this autumn in a debate, hosted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, where he brazenly picked up the whole range of racist lies that are being pushed by the British National Party (BNP) and EDL. This even included the utter bogeyman of Sharia law being implemented in UK, claiming this was "the logical endpoint of state multiculturalism".

Another issue he raised is the supposed major threat of Muslim men sexually exploiting young white women – based on one court case. He talked of "girls under 16 in Bradford disappearing from school, being drugged, imprisoned, kidnapped and forced into an unwanted marriage on the other side of the world" as if this were a mass phenomenon.

This has been a stock in trade of racists and brought to a crescendo of hate by the Nazis. Then it was "the Jews who preyed upon white women" in more recent times in the UK it was African-Caribbean males preying on white females.



**Asian youth fight back against fascists and police, Bradford 2001. The militant action sparked a rightward shift in Labour Party policy**

Cameron even mocked public service information, "endlessly translated into numerous languages, to cater for numerous people, who can then continue to go about their daily lives without ever having to learn English." He insisted that all immigrants to Britain must speak English and schools will be obliged to teach Britain's common culture, while at the same time cutting funding to programmes that teach English to migrants.

**Labour's reactionary role**

Unfortunately Cameron has models for this closer to home – and on the 'left', not the right. There is a long and dishonourable tradition of Labour MPs and party leaders playing the racist card for electoral gain, especially when a Labour government's right wing policies have damaged their position amongst their core support.

Ann Cryer, MP for Keighley, Bradford, once a member of the Socialist Campaign Group, swung sharply to the right after the Bradford riots were directly provoked by the BNP and racist police. Responding to a claim that the riots' root cause was poverty, Cryer said: "A great deal of the poverty ... is down to the fact that many of our Asian community do not

speak English". She then went on to link this to "arranged marriages" and to demand English tests for migrants.

Jack Straw MP for Blackburn, and holder of a series of the highest cabinet posts, quite deliberately "started a debate" by writing in a local paper that the Muslim women who came to his surgery wearing the niqab "made him feel uncomfortable" and that in future he might refuse to see them. Labour MP Phil Woolas added that the niqab was "frightening and intimidating". Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, chimed in to say it would be "better for Britain" if fewer Muslim women wore the veil, and that he supported "what Jack Straw has said".

Brown went on to claim that "core British values" were being neglected in schools, and should become a compulsory part of the curriculum for 11 to 16-year olds. He set up a commission under Lord Goldsmith that again came up with the idea of oaths of allegiance to the Queen in school-leaving ceremonies and citizenship tests, where new migrants would have to recount all the so-called great achievements of Britain. "We should stop apologising for the British Empire and start recording its achieve-

ments," he had the audacity to say on a visit to Africa.

This verbal racism went hand in hand with the introduction of a succession of asylum and immigration acts, detention centres, snatch squads, vouchers and other punitive measures against asylum seekers and migrant workers. It was Labour that built up from 1997 the whole edifice of state repression towards migrants.

And it wasn't just migrants that suffered. For example, one in two black youth aged 16-24 was unemployed last year compared with one in five white youth. Black people make up only 2.2 per cent of the population but about 15 per cent of prisoners are black. The numbers of black and Asian people stopped by police rose by 70% in the five years up to 2008-9. Of the 1,142,763 stop and searches in 2008-9, 15 per cent were of black people and 9 per cent Asian, according to Ministry of Justice figures last year.

**New racism and capitalism**

Socialists should resist these various new forms of racism, whatever the ideological doctrines they take as justification, from pseudo-feminist grounds for banning the niqab to authoritarian liberal promotion of 'community cohesion'.

Capitalism extends across the world to search out the greatest profits and cheap labour, and this process drives inward and outward migration. Cheap labour from parts of Europe, for example, was a central feature of the last long boom in Britain that accumulated the contradictions exploding in the recent crisis.

On the other hand, capitalism also has to rest on nationalism and the nation state. Since the nation state guards their

# DEEP RED

capital against foreign business rivals and the working class, it can't be dispensed with. Also nationalism conveniently stops workers from seeing their own class interests, and asks them to forsake them 'for the sake of the country'. Racism in turn justifies a whole world order in which 'civilised' (mainly white, imperialist) countries dominate more 'backward' (mainly non-white, semi-colonial) ones.

The contradiction between the free flow of capital and the nation state is what makes the capitalists' policy on migration and culture so unstable and incoherent. Many capitalists, for example, have condemned Tory proposals to restrict student and skilled migration because it will be bad for business. Yet increasingly Cameron and the Tories – with the Lib Dems meekly falling in behind them – are opting for hardnosed racism, dressed up in new language, to help divert attention from their attacks on British workers.

We should oppose this racist agenda in its entirety. What would teaching 'core British values' in schools mean anyway? Ridiculous banalities like 'tolerance' or 'fair play', as though people of any other nationality would seriously disagree with them? Respect for an aristocratic royal family of scroungers? Admiration for the seizure and plundering of a sixth of the globe by the British Empire?

Migrants who come to live and work in Britain should not be subjected to this. They should be warmly welcomed, and encouraged to integrate voluntarily and on an equal basis with workers and their families. The political force that can do this is the working class and its movement.

## From anti-racism to multiculturalism

In the 1970s, black and Asian movements, the far left and the Labour left all drew attention to the miserable conditions and discrimination facing immigrant communities, who were not being integrated but ghettoised in the poorest housing, with poor access to jobs and education. The response of the Labour government was the 1976 Race Relations Act, which banned discrimination and "incitement to racial hatred".

In the early 1980s, we saw uprisings of the black inner city youth against police harassment. The left which had grown in the Labour party and captured strongholds in the inner cities adopted anti-racist policies to outlaw discrimination – particularly in the public services – and to hire larger numbers of workers from migrant communities.

Then the 1980s saw the emergence of identity politics originating in feminism, which emphasised not so much the fight against racism and inequality as promoting positive community identity.

Gradually a part of the reformist left in local government no longer stressed integration but creating a 'rainbow coalition of communities, each with their leaders. Marxists rejected this approach because

- it militated against the unity of the working class on the basis of anti-racism and common struggle; and
- it would lead to fostering property-owning 'leaders' from the churches, mosques and business communities, not working class militants.

Multiculturalism was a reformist policy which certainly sought to overcome the harsh conditions in which black and ethnic minority communities lived, but on the basis of community leaders. The Labour left aimed to assemble a 'coalition'



**"The politics of socialism and class struggle are crucial to tackling racism"**

of such forces, modelled on the US Democratic Party. Labour councils fostered this process by creating a series of commissions, officers, etc. There was in fact a very sharp clash between these forces and the militants of the black and Asian communities who had led the struggles against racism in the 1970s and early 1980s. They scornfully condemned it as "the race relations industry".

But when the war against Iraq in 2003 massively alienated the Muslim communities, and the mosque 'elders' proved unable to prevent young Muslims from joining the antiwar movement, Labour and Tory alike began to denounce Muslim and Asian communities for "failing to integrate".

## Marxism and multiculturalism

Multiculturalism should be defended from right wing demands to assimilate into British culture. Its progressive element is that it promotes the idea of tolerance towards cultural and religious differences.

But we need not be uncritical of it. Multiculturalism has seen a selective integration, where middle class community leaders become integrated into official structures of local government and community policing, while the great majority suffer the double oppression of racism and exploitation as workers.

This is what makes multiculturalism as a doctrine intrinsically unstable.

The politics of socialism and class struggle are crucial to tackling racism. By uniting together on class lines, we can fight against inequality and oppression. We should not demand migrants give up or modify their customs, religion and use of languages from their original nation as long as they wish to retain them. Learning English is a good idea precisely because it will aid the unity of the working class and break down the social barriers that divide us, but this must be voluntary.

We do not believe that multiculturalism, if understood as a capitalist society which supposedly values equally all the national cultures of its inhabitants, can ever overcome racism. But the monoculturalism that Cameron, Merkel and Sarkozy want is far more dangerous and reactionary, because it consciously creates a target out of those who cannot or will not adopt their ersatz nationalism.

It is only one step from demanding migrant communities assimilate to a British nationality to calling for their expulsion if they will not. It is no accident that the Tory campaign for a British monoculture takes place at a time when some of the best things won by the multinational working class movement in this country are under attack: health, education, libraries, care for the elderly, and services for youth and women.

Socialists do not want to artificially preserve any national cultures, let alone religions – we want humanity by its own free choice to incorporate all the riches and everything of value our cultures have to teach us, literature and music, and above all the traditions of struggle for freedom and against exploitation in every country of the globe. If these histories are not taught in schools, then it is up to the workers' movement to keep the memory alive for future generations in the fight for a socialist world.

# workers power 5

## ★ MEDIA AND MONARCHY

# Racist rag backs fascist English Defence League

By Dan Edwards

The *Daily Star* recently upped its campaign of bigotry and race-hate by giving support to the fascist English Defence League (EDL). In a series of uncritical articles, *Daily Star* declared that the EDL was fighting for our "brave hero's" [their spelling not ours], that it's not racist or fascist, and that it truly understands "working-class" issues.

The right-wing rag also attempted to portray the EDL's leader Tommy Robinson as a sympathetic and embattled hero, crusading for English values against the threat of Islamist attack. In a poll published alongside these articles, it was claimed that 98% of *Daily Star's* readership supported the EDL.

The paper has been forced to climbdown. Richard "Dirty" Desmond, the paper's owner, has publicly distanced himself from the articles, and an article was soon published that condemned the EDL as "far-right extremists" taking advantage of the British peoples' love for their soldiers.

But the constant lies of the right-wing press



about mansion-dwelling asylum seekers and jihadists-under-the-bed swells the ranks of the fascists. BNP boss Nick Griffin once said that the best recruiting tools he had were "the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*", and it seems that Robinson is now benefiting from this as well.

During a time of economic crisis, with growing unemployment and massive public sector cuts, the bosses see fascists as capable of dividing workers and confronting on the streets those fighting back.

The EDL has already promised to "defend national monuments" should another big student demo march through London, and have published articles filled with hatred towards striking British Airways workers, progressive groups, and "reds".

If fascism is moving into the mainstream of politics, it is because the bosses are allowing it to. It is clear that the capitalists are expecting and preparing for a major class confrontation. It's about time our side got ready as well.

## King's Speech rewrites history

The Oscar-winning *King's Speech* isn't actually a bad film. Although it does not match the hype, it does have great moments.

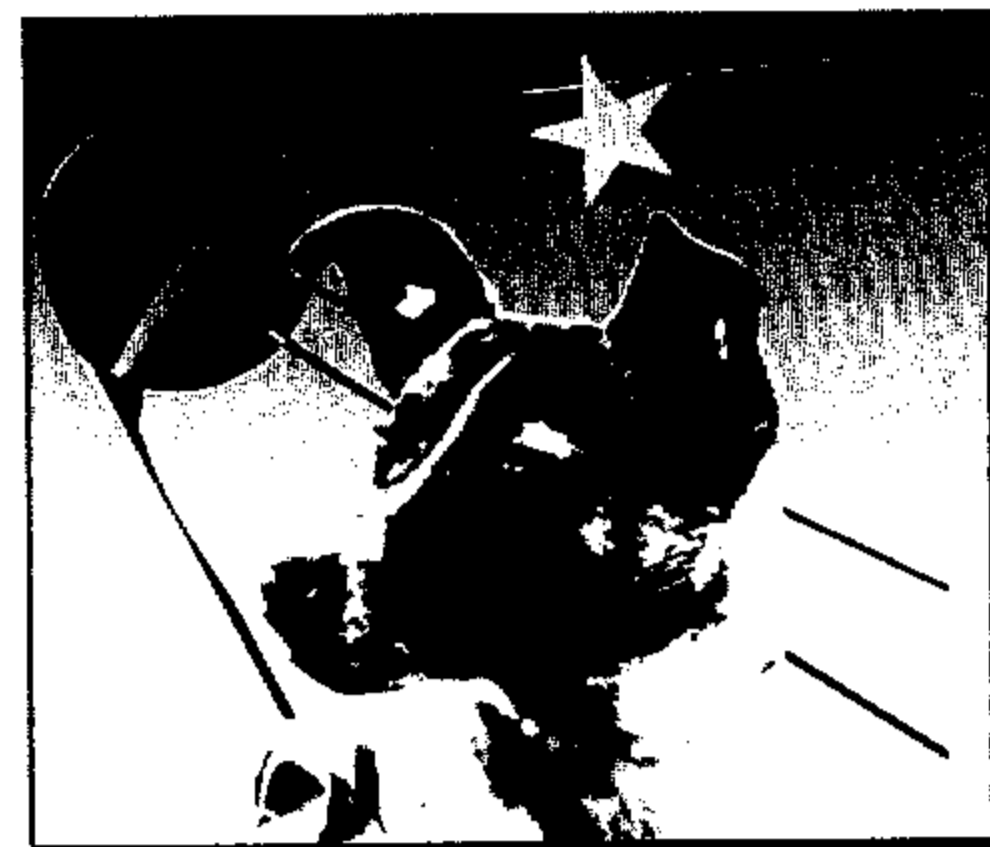
Colin Firth plays the speech-impediment-humbled George VI with power and conviction, as he is propelled to the throne after the abdication of his older brother, Edward VIII, and forced into a life of public speaking. He develops a relationship with his speech therapist Lionel Logue, played by Geoffrey Rush, which nicely combines some touching moments of friendship with a few eccentricities.

But the film rewrites the history of the British ruling class and the slide towards World War Two. Winston Churchill is portrayed as being firm friends with King George - instead

he did all he could to prevent the abdication of his friend and Nazi sympathiser Edward. George was much closer to Prime Minister Chamberlain, the appeaser of the Nazis, who handed Czechoslovakia to Hitler in 1938.

The film portrays the Windsors struggling with personal and political adversity - and an attempt to make them like any other family. A powerful message as the country prepares for a royal wedding.

In 1981 another royal wedding tried to rebrand the monarchy as a modern institution - right bang in the middle of the worst cuts since WWII. This time the cuts are the worst since the 1920s. Let's not believe the *King's Speech* hype and mark this year's royal wedding by fighting back.



## LAIKA'S VIEW FROM ORBIT

Our dog's life observed by everyone's favourite cosmic communist canine



My antenna have been busy tracking Tony "peace envoy" Blair and his friends. Mubarak, Gadaffi's son and Berlusconi all praise him highly! As my mum told me in the kennels: "Lie down with dogs and you will wake up with fleas."



King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia is facing mounting protests at home. And I'm picking up chatter that he's been invited to the wedding of some English prince too. In London. I do hope some of my English friends organise an appropriate reception party for the disgusting billionaire oil-rich reactionary sexist hereditary monarch - and a demo against King Abdullah would be good too.



Prime Minister Berlusconi is being put on trial in Italy for allegedly sleeping with underage women in exchange for money (see page 16) at Berlusconi's Bunga Bunga parties. He has tried to escape prosecution by saying that one young woman was Mubarak's granddaughter. As we should all get told in training, Silvio, when you're in a hole, stop digging.



If youth unemployment at 20% and £9,000 tuition fees weren't bad enough, Joanna Lumley thinks young people in Britain should live more like Ethiopian children, who "take 15 goats out into the field with only a chapati to eat all day." Sounds abit less than absolutely fabulous to me!